

A SOCIO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE ART AND MATERIAL  
CULTURE OF THE MIJIKENDA OF KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The Mijikenda peoples inhabit the coastal hinterland of Kenya. They comprise of nine subgroups of closely related people who speak mutually intelligible dialects of the Northcoast Bantu. The nine subgroups share a common history of origins and common social, cultural, economic and political institutions.

The thesis begins with an outline of the history and ethnography of the Mijikenda to the present day. This provides the basis for discussion of how the manufacture of the art and artifacts are linked to social, ritual and political institutions, and how they have been modified through the colonial and post-colonial periods. Particular attention is given to sculptures in wood and in clay that are part of ritual contexts. Problems of style, aesthetics and meaning are also discussed. Finally the present state of these arts is considered and the extent to which Mijikenda artists have begun to produce for an external patronage.

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## INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this thesis is to document an obsolescent artistic tradition as a contribution to the limited body of knowledge about the arts of Kenya. The choice of the Mijikenda as a community to study was based on the fact that though there is substantial information on their ethnography and history, there is no proper documentation of their artistic traditions; and although the decorated memorial sculptures, vigango, are relatively well-known, the literature about them is limited.

This thesis investigates how Mijikenda traditions of art and artifacts are linked to social, cultural and political institutions as they have developed through time. Mijikenda artistic traditions are examined in their multifarious synchronic dimensions of production, technology, materials, types of forms and context of use. Relevant Mijikenda rituals and ceremonies are discussed in detail in order to understand how they influence the production and consumption of artistic products. An important aspect of the study is the analysis of artistic style, aesthetics and meaning within the context of Mijikenda society. The study finally examines the impact of 'modernization' on Mijikenda traditional society, and the impact of it upon artistic traditions. One possible outcome of urbanization is the production of artistic forms for an external patronage. The study looks at various forms which are likely to be developed for such a market.

The title of this thesis will undoubtedly raise an important question as to why I have chosen to separate art from material culture, which by its very definition incorporates all material expressions of a community. The rationale behind this separation is partly based on the fact that in talking of a 'History of Art', as defined in Europe and America, the 'traditional' categorisation of 'art' and 'craft' still obtains. This thesis examines those

things westerners would call 'Art' in the general context of the production of artifacts. However, there is a distinction implied within Mijikenda culture between generalized production and production in a controlled ritual context. When artifacts which belong in each of these categories are considered, it does superficially look like the European distinction between 'art' and 'craft'; because on the one hand there are things like vigango which are sculptures, and on the other there is a range of artifacts from hoes to beaded bracelets which fall neatly into the category of craft. The general consensus among philosophers of art in Europe would be that a work of art is an artifact made to satisfy an aesthetic intention. The thesis attempts to pinpoint the aesthetic intentions of Mijikenda culture, and it is clear that these are significant within both categories of artifacts.

The question of what is art for Africa has, of course, raised questions about the definitions of art generally. Publications about African art are of two kinds. On the one hand there are books about sculpture, usually of the selected masterpieces variety, invariably according to the authors' aesthetic tastes. On the other there are a series of monographs about the arts of particular cultures which tend to be more wide-ranging in their search for aesthetic values. In recent years a third category seems to have originated, namely glossy publications about personal art and adornment. Such books generally strike one as really falling within the first category except, of course, that collectable artifacts have been replaced by beautiful bodies! Because of the sheer volume of books equating art in Africa with 'tribal' or 'exotic' or 'primitive' sculpture, the art traditions of East Africa have been neglected in favour of other regions where material production approximates popular European preconceptions. East Africa has been viewed as only capable of offering tourist arts, and very little in the way of distinct 'traditional' forms. Makonde art is probably perceived by such authors as the epitome of East African art. As there is this limited, and selective, way of looking at African artistic traditions, it means that a vast diversity of material has been neglected, though the collecting of artifacts for western museums and private collections has been going on for many years in Kenya, and presumably in other parts of East Africa.

Furthermore, there is the irony that although western criteria continues to be used to evaluate African sculpture, even this art form has not been fully accepted as Art by western scholars. This is clearly demonstrated by the treatment of African art forms in the west where they are usually placed in a special category of their own, such as relegation to Ethnographic museums, and in some cases to Natural History museums. For example, there is hardly any room for African work in the main British Museum. African material is instead preserved in a 'Museum of Mankind'. Although the British Museum could justify the separation on the grounds of space (the ethnographic collections were housed at the British Museum until 1970) the message is nevertheless conveyed that a separation must be maintained between the 'primitive' or 'tribal' on the one hand and the arts of acknowledged civilizations on the other, whether Egypt (a part of Africa generally considered apart from Africa) or Greece, etc. Divisions of this nature mean that non-western art, i.e. 'primitive', 'exotic', 'tribal', will continue to be perceived as if it cannot be compared on equal terms with the arts of apparently 'advanced' civilizations. The contradiction between the application of a distinction between 'art' and 'craft', with the acceptance of at least some African works as art, and the relegation of that art to a 'primitive' or ethnographical category will be obvious.

However, within recent years, some scholars have attempted to approach these forms from other perspectives, and in particular one of their aims has been to establish local perceptions and interpretations of artistic traditions. Concerted efforts have also been made to pinpoint the aesthetic dimensions of African artistic products as perceived by the makers and users themselves. In this connection, previous postulations that African artists were not motivated by aesthetic inclinations but were wholly constrained by social and ritual considerations in artistic production have largely been discredited by these studies. The idea that whereas the west has art for art's sake, while the art of non-western cultures is predominantly 'functional', is over-generalized. The simple fact is that most art is both, in so far as this terminology is acceptable. What has emerged is that all artistic products, whether for a ritual context or otherwise, invariably have an aesthetic

dimension which may not be easily perceived by outsiders. Faris (1972) has suggested that certain art forms among the Nuba, such as body painting, for example, are chiefly motivated by aesthetic and decorative factors, and that such art is deliberately oriented for viewing: in the case of body painting specifically it was an aesthetic celebration of the human physique - one could easily stretch the point and say that Nuba personal art was a highly mobile exhibition of art, as understood in the western sense of the word. Clearly, aesthetics goes beyond the sculptural domain and can be located in objects which would not fall under the traditional category of art when understood as 'fine' in contrast to crafts, or 'useful' arts. Material on the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1940) is a good example of this phenomenon. The Nuer have a specific aesthetic awareness which reinforces the fact that aesthetic considerations are as central in the lives of Nuer pastoralists as they are in other cultures. By castration of selected bulls and the training of the horns and the addition of embellishment, the Nuer produce an aesthetically pleasing artifact, i.e., a living work of art. Scholars now generally accept that what they choose to place emphasis on may not correspond to what is considered important by the makers and users. Analysis of African artistic traditions by African scholars from the cultures concerned will doubtless emphasize the disparities that exist between African and western interpretations. These new perspectives are helping to stimulate interest in neglected areas of artistic traditions.

In Kenya the most active area of research, that is, in terms of material artifacts, is in archaeology. There is the work of the Leakey family, the British Institute in Eastern Africa, the study of monuments along the East African coast, etc. Even Ian Hodder's ethnographical research (Symbols in Action, 1982) is motivated by archaeological concerns. At the Institute of African Studies (Nairobi), Sultan Somjee's well-documented material culture collection means that a good body of artifacts is available as a resource for historical and social research. Somjee has come under undeserved criticism by some Kenyan academics who have challenged what they term his 'preoccupation with fetishes'. Such denigrating comments are a clear statement of the prevailing perceptions among some intellectuals. It is a fact that some Kenyan academics consider

research into material culture as not constituting serious intellectual work. For them, this 'preoccupation with fetishes' is preoccupation with artifacts of the past which have no place in the present. Unfortunately this is a view held by a broad section of Kenyan scholars, some of whom appear to be embarrassed by 'traditional' culture. It is hoped that this present thesis will help to dispel such disparaging sentiments, and serve to illustrate the importance of documenting 'traditional' cultures as a step toward the development of a 'national' artistic culture relevant to the present.

The picture that emerges from an examination of Mijikenda material is that the main locus of aesthetic appreciation is in all artistic expressions pertaining to or closely associated with the human body. Though aesthetic appeal tends to be a personal, or 'subjective', experience, it appears that within Mijikenda society basic elements, which partly define aesthetics, have evolved into common experiences which the community as a whole can identify with and which allows for their participation in the collective enjoyment of them. Thus, things like a nicely oiled body, plucked eyebrows, chipped front incisors, twisted hairstyles, etc., formerly epitomised beauty (udzo, which implies one's natural beauty, and urembo which refers to embellishment or enhancement of it) in a woman, for example. The human body, as a focus of aesthetic enjoyment, is a vital object whose basic attributes can be further enhanced or highlighted by the addition of embellishment as a way, not only of giving pleasure to one's self, but to others who may view the body. In the past, embellishment often served specifically to mark out the social or ritual status of the person; and in this case, embellishment took several forms, such as hairstyles, clothing and ornaments, according to the specificity of the occasion. Embellishment was sometimes permanent, such as cicatrization, i.e. cutting patterns into the skin, used purely as decoration of the body. Some embellishment was temporary and served to mark certain ritual functions, such as initiation from one status to another. An example of this is body-painting which was erased at the end of the ceremony. A variety of ornaments were used, particularly by the women, to beautify one's body. Beaded bracelets, vorode, for example, used to be made by women for

decorating themselves. According to informants, women would compete to make the most attractive bracelets to wear on festive and ceremonial occasions and sometimes a woman would look so attractive that other women would ask each other in admiration, 'sisters, whose daughter is that?'. There are certain types of beaded ornaments worn around the waist by women and which are hidden under their clothes. These are said to enhance the anticipation of sexual pleasure. In as much as a painting might be hung on a wall from where it can be viewed and appreciated, the human body becomes a living artistic object which gives pleasure to oneself and to viewers.

The sculptural vigango likewise are closely associated with the human body. In reality, these objects are perceived by the Mijikenda not as inanimate objects but as living human beings. The sculptures are offered as new, well-decorated and beautiful bodies to ancestral spirits. The patterns identify the individual kigango with the relevant deceased, since it is said to be these patterns with which the ancestor was decorated at the time of his initiation into the prestigious luvoo institution; in some cases, the patterns are said to represent those cicatrized on the ancestor's body during his lifetime. A well-made and nicely embellished kigango is said to delight and to make happy the spirit; and in his contentment the ancestor in turn shows benevolence and brings happiness and good luck to his descendants. At the same time, the decorated vigango, particularly in contrast to simple unembellished memorial posts (mikoma) for ordinary deceased people, express the ancestor's luvoo status. The decorated form is also a 'statement' of the economic and political esteem of the elder, since a man had to have the means to pay the exorbitant fees, and had to be recognized and accepted as a person of authority in political deliberations.

It is further notable that magical ornaments worn by the Mijikenda are also offerings of aesthetic appeal made to another class of spirits, mapepo, which are quite distinct from ancestral spirits, makoma. Mapepo are malevolent spirits which invade the human body, and sometimes the head, and cause illness. Decorative magical ornaments are 'offered' to these spirits as an inducement to leave the body of their host. It is said that the spirits, on

seeing these attractive ornaments, are greatly pleased by them and are consequently appeased; as a result they leave the human body, and the affliction subsequently ceases. Metal magical bracelets made of copper, iron, brass and aluminium, often have engraved motifs which are said to identify the particular spirit being propitiated. A janus-type of clay figure, with two child-figures under the left and right arms of female and male figure, is offered to a bisexual spirit, called jangamizi, which afflicts men, women or children. The white clay figure is decorated with red and black spots to attract the jangamizi. On seeing the clay figure, the jangamizi, recognizing it as a good likeness of itself, enters it and is thus appeased; it is finally driven away from the person's body when the sculpture, together with a series of others which represent accompanying spirits, is broken during a spirit possession dance called ngoma za pepo. It is said that the ngoma za pepo, involving drumming, dancing and singing is performed as a way of pleasing the malevolent spirits.

Certain utilitarian objects, which may be said to be associated with the human body, are often decorated. Examples include certain baskets and stools. A milk container made from twined grass and decorated with leather straps, cowrie shells, coiled wire and metal beads, is used specifically as a portable container (in the manner that Maasai, Samburu and Turkana decorated calabashes are used for storing and carrying milk, for example). Other Mijikenda baskets used within the home are rarely ornamented. Stools used exclusively by elders and which are carried to festive and ceremonial functions are usually patterned with excised decorations and their surfaces are sometimes inlaid with wire and metal. Women's stools, on the other hand, are not patterned in this way because these stools never leave the home compound. In the past, however, it appears that brides were given well-ornamented stools by parents to take to their new homes. Such stools signified the woman's marital status.

Musical performance is an area where aesthetic pleasure and appreciation is very evident. A dancer's body becomes a vehicle for the expression of rhythm and interpretation of the music being played. Embellishment in the form of clothing, ornament, feathers, etc., intensifies the visual enjoyment. At the spiritual level,



music and dance performed at funeral and commemoration feasts are said to be a way of 'escorting' the deceased to his or her new life. Informants implied that death is not perceived as an end of a person's life, but that it is another phase of a person's life. This is further implied by the treatment of the body which is clothed in brand new cloths and anointed with castor-oil in a manner that a groom, a bride or an initiate might be adorned. A little girl, for example, is dressed in a traditional marriage skirt (hando) because, said an elder, 'everyone has her wedding day'. At memorial installation feasts the music, dances and songs are said to welcome back the ancestors, represented by the memorial posts, to the community.

As was stated at the beginning of this introduction, another aim of this thesis is to investigate what happens to art production under new and changing social conditions. The material presented in this study suggests that it is in the post-colonial phase that the most significant changes and modifications are taking place in Mijikenda culture. The documentation of Mijikenda artifacts, in the pre-colonial and colonial periods is extremely limited. However, it is possible to suggest that since the opportunities for moving out of a traditional community were not available for the majority of the Mijikenda, such that they continued to be governed by their own particular social, ritual, economic and political institutions, the production and consumption of the various material artifacts continued without any dramatic changes, at any rate until the gradual break-down of the kaya system of residence. The Mijikenda, in these two periods, continued to supplement their own material production with imported goods such as cloth, wire and beads, which were used in a definite Mijikenda way. In other words, these imported goods were usually used as raw materials in the production of artifacts with which the Mijikenda identified. Economic opportunities opened up in the 1840s for relatively young traders who were able to move out of the traditional communities and establish their own flourishing settlements into which they attracted a large number of followers and dependants. In such cases it seems that this class of nouveaux-riches may have discontinued some of their material traditions and incorporated imported artifacts which served to articulate their new status. The building of Arab or

Swahili style houses and the utilization of imported porcelain and Arab-style cutlery, by Digo traders of the 1840s, are examples.

With the opportunities that now exist for the majority of people in post-colonial Kenya, and with government pressure to 'encourage' people to send their children to school, and government attempts to get people to discard elements of their traditional cultures which are seen as a hindrance in the process of 'modernization', it is inevitable that certain foreign concepts and non-Mijikenda artifacts have begun to replace the old. Already western-type education and lifestyle, and improved transport to and from the towns, access to factory-produced goods, etc., have permeated Mijikenda society to such an extent that the material traditions have been considerably marginalized. In some cases, certain artifacts have disappeared. In other instances factory-made artifacts have replaced locally-made ones. Beaded bracelets, for example, have gone out of fashion and out of production. However, the need to embellish the body or to satisfy an aesthetic need remains, and is expressed by the use of new artifacts, such as machine-made, cheap plastic bangles, for instance. If examined side by side with locally-made types, such as beaded bracelets, these might seem to the outsider vastly inferior, both in terms of 'quality' and aesthetics. Substitutions of this nature, therefore, raise important questions about aesthetic criteria. If an object is used specifically to ornament the body, as a way of satisfying an aesthetic urge, why does the use of beaded bracelets, for example, not continue? An example such as this, illustrates clearly that novelty probably has a great part to play in aesthetic appeal in contemporary Mijikenda culture, and that it is the perceptions of what is now 'fashionable' or of 'importance' (in a transitional phase) that govern people's choice. I noticed that many Mijikenda women wore rubber oilseals, acquired by some traders from garages and sold in markets, as bangles. I would not describe these oilseals as colourful or 'attractive', yet they evidently have appeal as an 'exotic' ornament to wearers. Perhaps the use of these novel objects identifies the wearers with what they perceive as the present. In other words, these objects become a visible expression of the users' desire to be a part of the present world - such objects locate them within a specific period in history; this suggestion is

borne out by the fact that the Mijikenda themselves frequently refer to their own objects, such as ornaments, as 'things of the past'. Perhaps it is inevitable that it is the younger generation which readily responds to new changes, while the older generation is resistant. The young generation is quick to reject certain elements of Mijikenda traditional culture, such as the ritual shaving of the head as a sign of bereavement, the mode of dress, etc. What are not easily discarded are the non-physical elements, such as the belief in ritual restrictions, social expectations and behaviour, the belief in a spiritual world or worldview, however reluctant one might want to be a part of it. Of course this does not mean that there are not those people who are able, more or less, to distance themselves from these 'traditional' expectations.

The thesis raises questions about the advantages that 'modernization' offers Mijikenda artistic producers. The tourist industry is an area which has stimulated the production of a wide range of artifacts throughout Kenya. This has had both negative and positive effects on the artistic traditions of Kenya. In some cases, there has been a fall in standard of the artifacts being produced, and in others some artifacts have been revived. Perhaps the most obvious contradiction, in the increased production and revival of local artifacts, is that these objects are made for an external consumption and very few are utilized by local people themselves. As far as Mijikenda artistic producers are concerned, to what extent have they taken 'advantage' of the tourist market, particularly since it is the Kenyan coast where tourism is greatly entrenched? Whereas Kamba carvers have established a profitable niche for themselves in the making and selling of tourist art within predominantly Mijikenda localities, few Mijikenda are producing for this market. Two obvious areas in which the Mijikenda have begun to commercialize their products are in dance and in the manufacture of some ornaments and decorative memorial sculptures, vigango, though for the latter this is still very limited. What has happened instead is that Kamba carvers are taking advantage of the marketability of these decorative sculptures and are producing them for tourist consumption and for art galleries in Nairobi and overseas. Some Mijikenda carvers have

either been taught by or have copied Kamba carvers in the production of what they see as typical 'tourist art', such as animal figures, Maasai figures, masks, etc., and in some cases have also been commissioned by dealers to carve vigango, whose form they are familiar with. However, whether more Mijikenda carvers will eventually produce these vigango, which they are still reluctant to do because of the ritual context of these sculptures, remains to be seen.

The thesis that follows is divided into the following parts:

1. PART ONE is a historical account of the Mijikenda in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. It consists of four chapters:

Chapter One defines the Mijikenda people and outlines their migration to the littoral of Kenya at the turn of the 16th century, and the subsequent establishment of fortified settlements (makaya) set on inaccessible forested ridges. Within these settlements, they developed their particular social, ritual and political institutions.

Chapter Two deals with Mijikenda economy based, as it was, on agriculture, craft production and trading activities. Particular attention is paid to the development of inter-dependent economic and political alliances with adjacent neighbours, such as the coastal Swahili, and to the trading activities from the 16th to the 19th centuries. These, together with population growth and land shortage within the makaya, led to the disintegration of makaya as 'centralized' settlements, and to the establishment of scattered communities. In the context of change, as precipitated by economic conditions, this section is important in hypothesising possible changes or modifications in material culture.

Chapter Three looks at missionary activity as the precursor to colonial rule, and examines the sort of relationship that existed between the missionaries and the Mijikenda. Within the second section of this chapter we look at the impact of colonial rule on Mijikenda society and the consequences of stringent policies imposed upon it.

Chapter Four looks specifically at post-colonial policies which have a direct bearing upon the Mijikenda. The chapter concentrates on the Chief's Authority Act. cursory comments are made on other government policies which have possible implications for Mijikenda society.

2. PART TWO of the thesis deals with artistic production and technology. Within it are two chapters:

Chapter Five looks at the possible classification of Mijikenda makers and artifacts, and the position of Mijikenda women in artistic production.

Chapter Six covers different aspects of technology and types of material cultures. It begins with a discussion of materials and sources, and then examines the types of artifacts produced, from architecture, woodwork, basketry, calabashes, ceramics, musical instruments, metalwork to personal art forms.

3. PART THREE of the study is concerned with the institutions of art patronage. The section consists of five chapters:

Chapter Seven deals with marriage ceremonies.

Chapter Eight is concerned with burial and commemoration ceremonies.

Chapter Nine deals with healing.

Chapter Ten examines the production and installation of ancestral memorials (mikoma) for non-status Mijikenda adults.

Chapter Eleven is concerned with the production and installation of ancestral sculptures (vigango) for status elders. The ritual institutions linked with these embellished memorials and the ritual context of production are discussed.

4. PART FOUR deals with Mijikenda style, aesthetics and meaning and tourist art. It consists of three chapters:

Chapter Twelve traces the history of Mijikenda artifacts. An attempt is made to analyse Mijikenda style by examining a range of artifacts in relation to material from neighbouring people. The intention is to understand the continuities and discontinuities of style in the East African coastal region.

Chapter Thirteen explores the question of aesthetics and meaning in Mijikenda work.

Chapter Fourteen discusses the commercialization of Mijikenda artistic traditions for tourist consumption.

5. Chapter Fifteen is the conclusion. Within this chapter are examined the changes and modifications taking place in Mijikenda art and society.

6. Photographs and Illustrations - There is a separate volume containing relevant photographs and line drawings of Mijikenda artifacts, funeral and healing activities. In addition, the volume contains photographs and drawings of artifacts of other coastal and Kamba peoples.

## METHODOLOGY

To begin with, a thorough survey and compilation of historical and ethnographical traditions from published and archival sources were undertaken. After this, field research was conducted from January 1984 to July 1984, and again in September 1985. Between August and October 1984 museum studies were undertaken in Kenya, and again from March to August 1985. The research was carried out in two stages as follows:

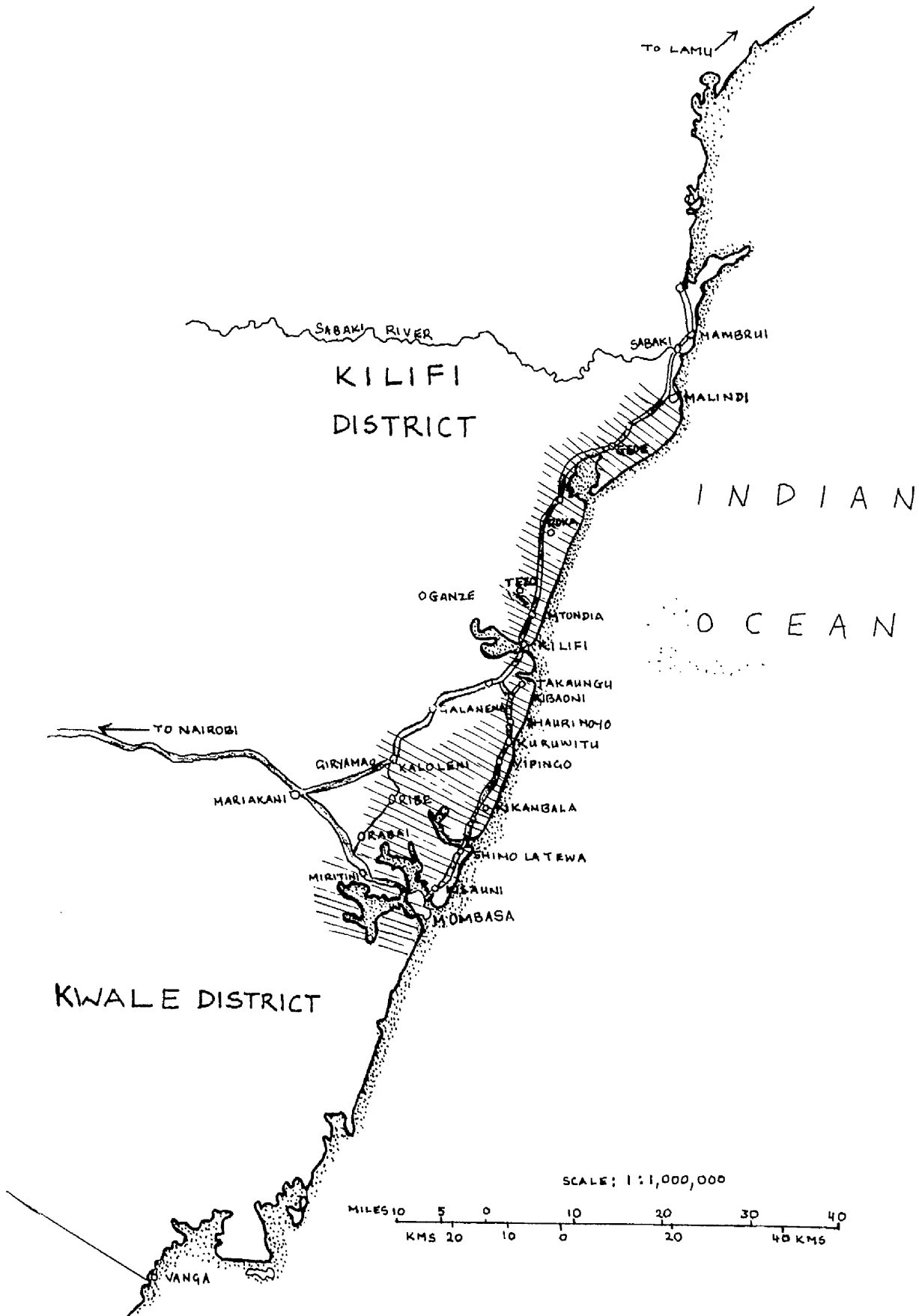
### 1. PILOT STUDY

- a. Background work in history and ethnography of the Mijikenda.
- b. A survey and photographic record of Mijikenda artifacts in the British Museum.
- c. Photographic and illustrated records of Mijikenda objects in the Kenya National Museums, Kenya National Archives and the African Heritage gallery.
- d. A survey and photographic record of Mijikenda artifacts still in use in Mijikenda communities.
- e. A survey and photographic record of Mijikenda and Kamba carvers of tourist art.

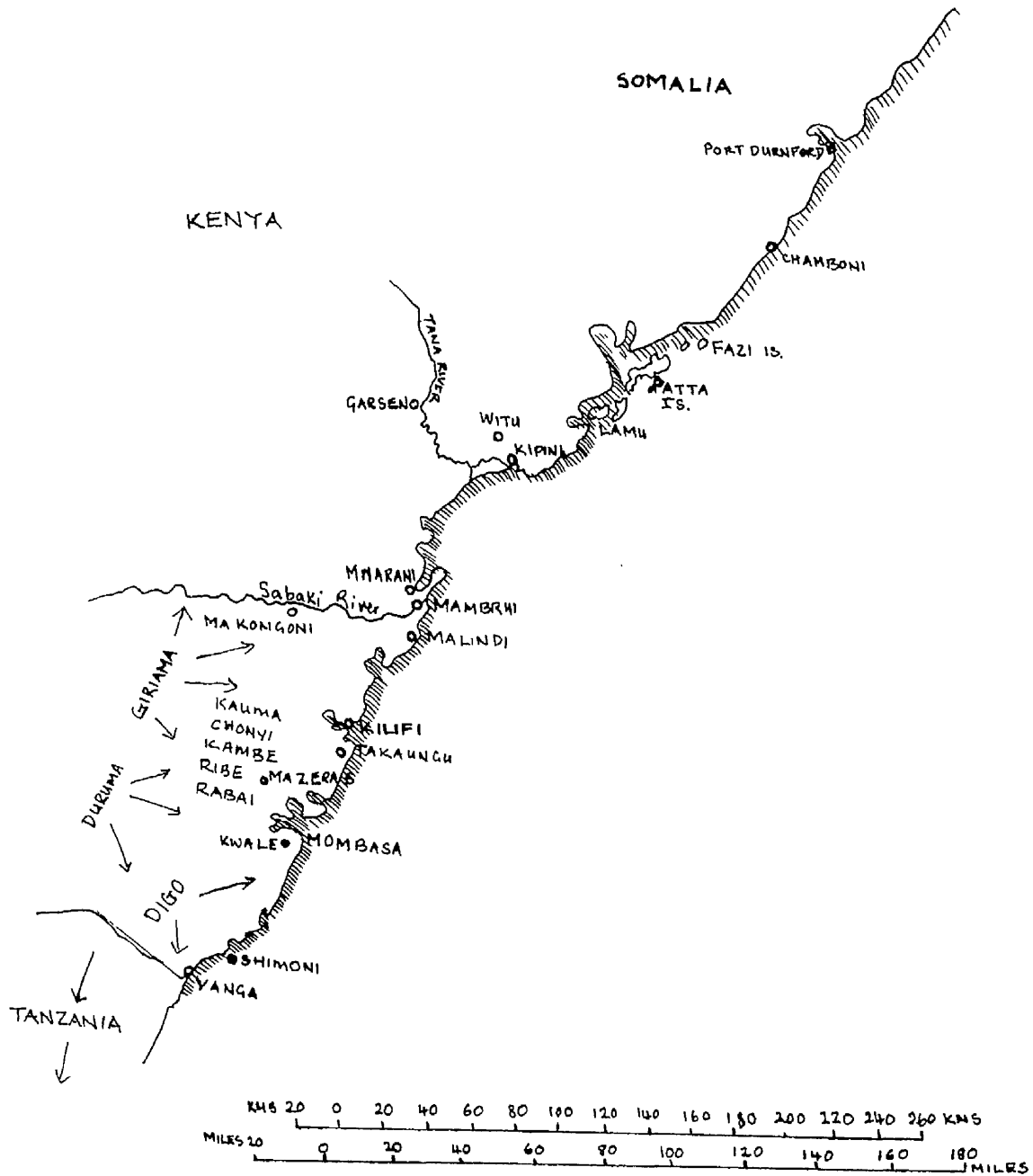
### 2. EXTENSIVE FIELD RESEARCH

- a. Taped and written interviews were conducted with male and female informants to elicit information on the social, ritual and historical significance of Mijikenda artistic traditions.
- b. Elders were interviewed specifically about social, ritual and political institutions within Mijikenda society.
- c. Ceremonies and ritual functions were attended and recorded.
- d. Mijikenda carvers and other artifact producers were interviewed.
- e. Mijikenda and Kamba carvers producing specifically for the tourist market were interviewed.

AREAS OF FIELD RESEARCH







COASTAL TOWNS AND MIJIKENDA LOCALITIES.



The Mijikenda and Surrounding Peoples

PART ONE

THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter One: The Mijikenda

(i) Origin and Distribution

The Mijikenda comprise nine sub-groups of closely-related agricultural people who occupy the coastal hinterland of Kenya. They speak mutually intelligible dialects of the Northeast Coastal Bantu, and share a common history of origins, cultural, social and political institutions.<sup>1</sup> They are grouped into the Northern Mijikenda, made up of the Giriama, Kauma, Chonyi, Jibana, Kambe and Ribe, who all practise patrilineal descent. The Rabai and Duruma comprise the Central Mijikenda and have a double unilineal descent system, while the matrilineal Digo form the Southern Mijikenda.<sup>2</sup> The most recent population census of 1979 numbered the Mijikenda at 732,830, out of which 357,116 were male and the rest female. The 1969 census numbered them at 520,520, out of which 255,508 represented male and the rest female.<sup>3</sup> The Giriama are the largest sub-group, both in population and in the land they occupy. The Digo are the second biggest, and the Duruma are the third largest.

The nine subgroups inhabit a littoral strip extending from the Uмба River in the south coast near Vanga to the Galana (Sabaki) River in the north coast near Mambrui. This coastal hinterland is of differing ecological zones, from extremely dry areas to relatively fertile ones. The most fertile region is the ridge which stretches from the Shimba Hills south of Mombasa to the Kilifi Creek north of Mombasa. It is characterised by an abundance of vegetation and in particular palm trees. In a good year this ridge receives an average rainfall of 35-50 inches in two rainy seasons, during the long rains from March to May, and during the short ones from September to October. The Mijikenda are able to practise swidden agriculture and to grow a variety of crops in their differing zones. Maize is the staple crop supplemented by cassava, bananas, legumes, and a variety

of fruit such as mango, citrus, pineapple and papaya. The main cash crops are palms (which provide palm wine, coconuts, copra, roofing material and fibre for ropes), cotton and cashewnuts. Rice is grown in some regions both as a cash crop and for domestic use. Cattle are kept in the drier areas mainly by the Rabai, Duruma and Giriama. All groups keep chickens, ducks, sheep and goats for home consumption. Some groups which live close to the sea engage in fishing for trading purposes and for home use. Mijikenda traditions indicate that they were driven southwards to the coast of what is now Kenya in the beginning of the 17th century by the Galla during a period which appears to have been fraught with wars and migration motivated by population growth and lessening of resources. Local traditions say that the Mijikenda moved down from Singwaya, a place thought by historians to have been located somewhere near the present village of Burkao or Port Durnford in Somalia. The Digo say they were the first to migrate to the Kenya coast and that they settled in the south of the region. The rest of the Mijikenda followed, each group settling in its particular location.<sup>4</sup>

The term 'Mijikenda' is a relatively recent one used to refer collectively to the nine groups. It is a Swahili equivalent of the Mijikenda word 'midzichenda' meaning the 'nine villages' or 'nine peoples'. The term first came into use in the late 1940s when, in response to growing nationalist sentiments in Kenya, Mijikenda leaders founded the Mijikenda Union. Prior to this term, the Mijikenda had been popularly known as 'Wanyika', a term which appears to have come into use in about 1728; the term, meaning 'people of the bush', is now considered pejorative and has become redundant. In early Swahili records, specifically the Kitab al Zamuj, the Mijikenda were known as kashur. Portuguese records of 1631 refer to people they called musungulos, said by historians to have been the Mijikenda.<sup>5</sup>

(ii) The Kaya

Having migrated down to the coastal hinterland, each of the nine groups established highly fortified villages (kaya, singular; makaya, plural), set in inaccessible forested ridge tops (Plate 1,2). Within these settlements the groups developed their own identities, while

maintaining ritual, cultural, economic, and political links with each other. These common characteristics gave them a basis for relative unity and a framework which more or less defined the degree of their interdependence.

The makaya have been described as villages which are peculiar to the coastal Mijikenda. Each kaya was completely surrounded by three thick palisades and thick forest. The kaya had a south and north entrance each of which had two, three or even four wooden gates, each measuring about 4 feet across and 6 feet in height. These gates had iron hasps and wooden bars for closing, and bolts which could be fixed to the ground. The threshold measured about three feet above the level of the path, with steps made by piling up large stones. According to a colonial report of 1913, Kaya Giriama was situated in a patch of beautiful forest which measured approximately 1½ miles in diameter. The narrow paths were about ¼ mile long and were bordered by dense forest. The central clearing within the kaya measured about 280 yards across. Griffiths (1935) noted that Kaya Mtswakara of the Duruma was established in an area measuring about 8 acres in the forest.<sup>6</sup>

The building in the kaya followed a circular plan in which the houses situated along the perimeters of the circle were the meeting houses, called lwanda, of the clans. Surrounding each lwanda were the homes of the clan members and their families. In the centre of the kaya was an uncleared section where a sacred protective magic object was buried. This protective artifact was called finjo and is said to have been brought from Singwaya (according to the Mijikenda, the finjo was a potful of potent medicine. The Chonyi say theirs was a figure with breasts). Near this sacred place was a large meeting house called the moro, where the Council of Elders met. This was a large structure sheltered by a fig and a baobab tree. The Rungu ya Vaya, a secret meeting place for ritual specialists, who controlled all medicines and were the voice of authority, was situated in the forest. There was a designated site called chigaroni where all initiation ceremonies took place. There was also a cemetery in one section of the kaya.<sup>7</sup>

The houses in the kaya were oval in plan and otherwise more or less hemispherical in shape. These houses were entirely thatched with grass. The only opening was a low door set midway of the house.

Inside was a loft for grain, underneath which was the hearth, and the other half was divided into sleeping quarters for the children and the parents. According to Johnstone (1902) the houses of the Kambe elders were circular and were raised on a round platform about 2 feet above the ground.<sup>8</sup>

Life within the kaya was ordered by a Council of Elders, and by the observance of a multitude of regulations probably intended to ensure stability and protection from external aggression. For example, no one was allowed to enter the kaya with shoes; no whistling was allowed; the cutting of firewood in the kaya during the evening was forbidden; the cutting of roots of trees and plant creepers was likewise forbidden; no one could enter the kaya through any other way but the main gates.<sup>9</sup>

### (iii) Social and Political Organisation

The community of people within the kaya was organised by age as well as descent. Within each kaya were four to six distinct clans, each of which had its own area and its own specialised function. The Giriama, Kauma, Chonyi, Jibana, Kambe and Ribe traced descent patrilineally from father to son. The Rabai and Duruma practised double unilineal descent in which a person inherited both the patriclan of his father and the matriclan of his mother's brother. The Digo traced descent matrilineally from mother's brother to sister's son.<sup>10</sup>

People progressed from childhood to eldership through a series of grades. Between the ages of eight and twelve boys were circumcised and initiated into the age-grade system called the rika (literally 'circumcision'). The rika has been described as a group composed of circumcised males ranging in age from about eight to fifty-two and over. Every four years all eligible males were initiated together to form a set, and when thirteen sets had been formed, the three senior-most sets entered the kambi, the Council of Elders. Twelve years after this induction into the kambi, the next three sets were initiated to join it. Thereafter, every eight years succeeding pairs of sets were entered into the kambi. Initiation from one grade into another in the rika cycle was marked by ceremonial dances, and by exorbitant fees. As the men moved into more important grades

the fees became correspondingly higher, and the rituals became more and more demanding. It is very possible that some people stopped at one level for lack of means to pay the appropriate fees.

The lowest association in the gerontocratic hierarchy was the habasi, composed of three sets of circumcised men of varying ages. Once the senior group was ready to move out of the habasi it underwent rituals and performed a ceremonial dance, after payment of a fee. The rituals lasted three days during which time the candidates were shown artifacts, such as sacred drums, pertaining to their group. The candidates moved from the habasi into the nyere group, which was the 'warrior' group.

The nyere were under the care of an instructor (muhagizi) who taught them important things relevant to their grade. At this stage the learners were called 'children of medicines' (ahoho a mihasoni), because they were essentially being taught to identify medicinal plants and their uses. Having completed their courses, the nyere were ready to move into the Council of Elders. They performed the mungaro dance after paying the requisite fee. The whole body of candidates was required to contribute maize in sufficient quantities to purchase 7 bullocks for the mungaro ceremonies and 6 bullocks for the privilege of becoming members of the kambi. On the day designated, all eligible initiates smeared themselves with red ochre, wore skirts made of palm leaves, tied borrassus palm nut rattles round their feet, and wore strings of plant nuts around their waists. They danced for three days, and underwent rituals. After the completion of these rituals they became full-fledged members, but junior members only, of the kambi. They were permitted to listen to all proceedings, but could take no part in any of the decision-making.<sup>12</sup>

The kambi was divided into kambi mbere (leading council); the middle one was kambi kahi (middle council); and finally kambi nyuma (rear council). When the kambi nyuma members wanted to proceed forward, they petitioned the kambi mbere to allow them to dance the sayo, a clapping dance which was performed in a day. Leaders were elected from each clan, and these were to be the future leaders of the kambi kahi and kambi mbere. The kambi kahi danced the kirao to enter the kambi mbere. For this dance the candidates covered their bodies with castor-oil. Their heads were decorated with pieces of

wood sharpened at one end, and frayed at the other to resemble a flower. After the ceremony, these pieces of wood were collected and thrown away in a particular place. All the elders being initiated wore an iron ring round their necks. These rings were flattened on the inside like a curved blade. The candidates also carried staves to which were tied pieces of stick. Metal rattles were worn at the ankles and goat beards were tied on the arm above the elbow. Long hollow bamboo poles were stamped on the ground to make a noise like a drum. According to an archival note of 1913, during one of these dances, everything was extremely well-organised, dances were decorous and orderly and strict discipline was maintained by the elders.<sup>13</sup> The initiates were entitled to wear a special coloured cloth tied with a red sash, and to carry a forked staff and medicine bag. Once they had successfully completed the rituals, the new members participated fully in kambi affairs.

There is quite a lot of confusion in the literature about the precise sequence of entry into these various grades. In most of the literature, there is a lack of information on the specific and logical order in which the dances were performed as part of the rituals. What emerges, however, is that each dance was important in marking out the different stages of exit and entry from and into another grade. Taylor (1891: 43-45) gives what appears to be a very logical list of various grades and the different dances that were performed by the initiates.

One main area of confusion surrounds the gohu.<sup>14</sup> This group of men belonged to an exclusive association denoted by the wearing of a buffalo horn bracelet and certain coloured cloths. In some of the literature (e.g. Taylor 1891) it is said that the elders in the kambi mbere wore buffalo horn bracelets, which implies that elders were invested with this ornament at entry into the senior-most council. Some writers (e.g. Parkin 1982; Brown 1980) state that the luvoo bracelet was exclusive to the Gohu association, a prestigious club for wealthy, married men. My field research (1984) parallels earlier literature which says that once elders reached the kambi mbere rank they opted to become luvoo members. Given the nature of the society in which power lay in wealth and esteem, it is likely that most members of the kambi mbere, having already proved themselves as ritual experts, and as a wealthy gerontocracy, would necessarily



have wanted to enter the luvoo association, if indeed this was actually a totally separate body from the grade system. From the luvoo stage, elders could choose to enter the vaya association which was associated with medicine, and from the vaya some elected to join the fisi, a body responsible for the most potent of oaths and medicine. The fees for these societies were inordinately high. The fee, however, was not the overriding factor since an elder had to have the right qualifications to be allowed to apply to enter these associations.<sup>15</sup>

What adds to the confusion is that among the nine groups, different names were used for the leading elders. Among the Giriama, the leading elders were called viza who were equivalent to the kambi mbere elders. On ceremonial occasions they wore cylindrical head-dresses of ostrich feathers, and their assistants, called walombe, wore cow-tails set upright to their foreheads. Among the Chonyi, the leading elders of the kambi were called wanyambura. At ceremonies they wore solid crowns of millet flour to which three split palm leaves, resembling flowers, were stuck. Their assistants were known as wezi and they wore cylindrical headdresses of ostrich feathers. Jibana elders were known as bari and they wore cylindrical head-dresses of ostrich feathers. The Rabai main elder was called mutumia wa kaya. He wore a headdress of ornamental leather which went round his face and to which a row of ostrich feathers was attached. He also wore a fine cape made of sable antelope skin, and his assistants wore a row of ostrich feathers set at right angles to their heads. The Ribe, Kambe and Kauma leading elders were called gohu, and their assistants were known as bora. The gohu wore crowns of millet flour with feathers stuck in them. The Digo and Duruma elders were called ngambi. They wore headdresses of ostrich feathers and capes of sable antelope or giraffe skin.<sup>16</sup>

Elders who entered the luvoo/gohu association underwent rituals called thura (from kuthuria, meaning 'to be at an end, to receive the crowning honours ...').<sup>17</sup> While undergoing the strenuous rituals the candidates were called wamondo. They wore heavy crowns of clay (millet flour according to informants, 1984) decorated with strips of palm leaves split to make them resemble feathers. Their bodies were smeared with red ochre. After the ceremony the elders were given buffalo horn bracelets. (See Chapter Eleven on Vigango for more

details of this ceremony.)

As was stated earlier, elders could elect to become vaya and fisi after paying a high fee. The vaya paid fourteen lengths of cotton cloth or fourteen rupees; ten calabashes of palm wine; one large bearded goat; seven cooking pots of maizemeal; four measures of castor oil seeds and one new axe.<sup>18</sup> The fisi paid a higher fee than this. From the vaya body were also drawn elders responsible for all land matters. These elders were called enyetsi, and there was one representative per clan. The enyetsi could convene meetings of the kambi.<sup>19</sup>

There is no detailed information for Mijikenda women's associations. According to the Krapf/Rebmann dictionary, women went through similar ceremonies as those undergone by men.<sup>20</sup> These ceremonies and rites were called gundi. The women passed from the nyere to the kambi equivalent, and performed dances similar to those performed by the men. They also smeared their bodies with clay (probably red ochre) and were initiated by women. According to Parkin (1982) wives of elders in prestigious societies organised themselves into an advisory body called kifudu which was concerned with marital affairs.<sup>21</sup> The women were responsible for instructing the young women in all matters pertaining to women's issues. They also controlled aspects of healing relevant to women. These days women organise themselves into dance groups called kifudu; these groups perform at ceremonial and ritual functions.

FOOTNOTES

1. T. Spear, The Kaya Complex: A History of the Mijikenda Peoples of the Kenya Coast to 1900, 1978, pp.4,10-13; Nurse/Phillipson, 'The North-Eastern Bantu Languages of Tanzania and Kenya: A Classification', Kiswahili, 45, 1975, pp.1-28.
2. Spear, Op.Cit., p.6.
3. Republic of Kenya: Statistical Abstracts (Kenya Population Census) 1969, Vol.1. (Nairobi, 1970) and 1979. Ministry of Economic Planning and Development.
4. Spear, Op.Cit., pp.16-37.
5. 'Musungulos' is a name that may have come from a Bantu-speaking people in the Juba Valley called Musunguli. J. Kirkman, Fort Jesus, 1970, 20n; J. Strandes, The Portuguese Period in East Africa, 1961, pp.142,306; G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, The Mombasa Rising Against the Portuguese in 1631 from Sworn Evidence, 1962.
6. Kenya National Archives: PC/COAST/1/12/160: 1913; J.B. Griffiths, 'Glimpses of a Nyika Tribe (Wa Duruma)', JRAI, 1935, pp.267-296.
7. Griffiths, Op.Cit., p.292.
8. H.B. Johnstone, 'Notes on the Customs of the Tribes Occupying Mombasa Subdistrict', JRAI, 1902, pp.263-272.
9. Choga Chiringa Gurudu, interviewed at Kambe (1984) about life in the Kaya. Choga was born and brought up in a kaya.
10. Spear, Op.Cit., pp.51-58.
11. Op.Cit., pp.58-65; A. Champion, The Agiryama of Kenya, 1967.
12. Kenya National Archives: DC/KFI/3/1: 1913; W.E. Taylor, Giryama Vocabulary and Collections, 1891, pp.43-45.
13. KNA: DC/KFI/3/1: 1913.
14. D. Parkin, Speaking of Art: A Giriama Impression, 1982, pp.12-15; Champion, Op.Cit.; Taylor, Op.Cit., pp.43-45.
15. Parkin, Op.Cit., pp.18-21; Taylor, Op.Cit., pp.44-45.
16. J. Adamson, The Peoples of Kenya, 1967, pp.285-309.
17. J. Krapf/J. Rebmann, A Nika-English Dictionary, 1887, p.360.
18. Champion, Op.Cit., p.23.
19. Taylor, Op.Cit., p.45.
20. Krapf/Rebmann, Op.Cit., p.115.
21. Parkin, Op.Cit., p.12.

## Chapter Two: Economy - Agriculture, Craft Production and Trade

### (i) Agriculture and Craft Production

In the pre-colonial era, the Mijikenda economy was based on subsistence agriculture with surplus production largely directed towards the costs of passage through the age-grade system and initiation into the associations that followed upon the graduation of elders. All fees, as well as fines levied for offences committed, were paid to the elders, who were, as a result, a relatively wealthy gerontocracy.

During this period the allocation of land, and the adjudication of disputes concerning land were under the strict control of elders, called enyesti. Land was not a saleable commodity, and the selling of it was looked upon by the elders as theft.<sup>1</sup> Land belonged to the community, and though a son might 'inherit' land from his father, in reality what he was inheriting was not the land as such, but usufruct rights; that is, the surface rights (cultivation rights), so that 'ownership' of land was ownership only in so far as the use of land was concerned. However, with migration away from the makaya and the expansion into other areas, some of which were not Mijikenda 'traditional' land, the land tenure system became more and more modified, such that the usufruct rights eventually came to be passed on through the system of inheritance based on patrilineal, double unilineal and matrilineal descent. Much later still, people began to sell 'their' land. Today the question of land ownership is the cause of many family feuds particularly when title deeds are issued by the government.

Virgin land could be tilled and worked and anyone else wishing to use it after it had already been cultivated could give the original user a token in the form of a fowl or a calabash of palm wine, in order to use the land. The original user, however, could at any time redeem the use of the land by paying back the token. Crops were private property but permanent crops such as coconuts and fruit trees could be mortgaged by the owner. Mortgage arrangements were often made when a man needed bridewealth for himself or for his sons. The person who took up the mortgage had the use of the trees until they were redeemed by the owner.<sup>2</sup>

Extensive forms of swidden agriculture were practised in the pre-colonial period. Fallow periods usually followed after every four years of land use. These fallow periods lasted for not less than 10 years in order for the land to revert back to bush and for the fertility of the soil to be restored. The agricultural implements consisted of three basic tools; the hoe, a digging stick, and a machete. With these tools, farmwork depended on a large work force, composed of men, women and children. In most cases there was not a very distinct division of labour, though men tended to clear and burn the bush, and women did anything from planting and weeding, to harvesting. Farming was carried on along the slopes of the ridges when people still lived in their central makaya and a variety of crops were grown; these included grains such as millet, eleusine, sorghum and later maize, legumes, groundnuts, cassava, coconuts and a variety of fruit like papaya, mangoes, citrus and bananas. In any good year, that is, when the rains were favourable, enough food could be produced, and a surplus guaranteed which could be exchanged for trade goods. In a bad season, people were often very dependent on help from the coastal Swahili.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from agriculture, craft production provided for other needs in the form of utensils, tools and body ornaments. Individual craftspeople produced for the family or for the community and some artifacts were produced for trade, such as pots, jewellery and baskets for example. There was an interdependent trade in artifacts between the different Mijikenda groups. Artifacts could be exchanged for other services, such as the Chonyi being called upon to render their services as expert rainmakers in exchange for palm wine or artifacts.<sup>4</sup>

The Mijikenda economic unit was composed of a man, his wife/wives and children. This unit produced and consumed its own food and craft objects. Surplus produce was exchanged for other goods required by the family. This unit had a more or less defined division of labour, based on sex and age, in which young boys helped to look after livestock, helped with milking and farming. Girls helped their mothers with various household tasks, while women did most of the household chores, such as cooking, fetching water and firewood, tending to the family, and in addition they did farmwork. They were responsible for their own individual vegetable plots and their family plots. Women also produced different types of artifacts. Men

built and repaired homes, engaged in farmwork, and in craft production. They also participated in the Council of Elders, if, and when, they became eligible to do so. The source of family wealth, and indeed of community wealth, was its plots of land, craft production and trade. Trade provided a substantial portion of community wealth.

(ii) Trading Activities from the 16th to the 19th Centuries

By the time the Mijikenda arrived at the littoral of Mombasa at the beginning of the 16th century, the coastal towns were well-developed and flourishing as a result of the lucrative Indian Ocean trade which was already of some antiquity.<sup>5</sup> The Mijikenda also met factional wars between different Arab and Swahili groups, and they were drawn into these political wars almost as soon as they arrived. Prior to Mijikenda migration to the Kenya coast, Arab and Persian colonists had, between the 7th and 13th centuries A.D., established city states along the coast, and the period from the 12th to the 15th centuries gave rise to wealthy towns such as Mogadisho, Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa and Kilwa.<sup>6</sup> During this period mosques and coral houses were built by the Arabs and Swahili and a tradition in the visual arts, characterised by particular kinds and styles of carved artifacts, developed. The coastal towns imported large quantities of luxury goods from Arabia, India and China and in turn exported a substantial quantity of local goods, much of them acquired from the interior through trade with the Mijikenda and other inland peoples. Later these coastal towns produced their own luxury goods, such as woven silks, gold and silver work.<sup>7</sup> The coastal traders monopolised the Indian Ocean trade and indeed had done so for a considerable period of time. However, this pattern was to change with the arrival of the Portuguese in the 1500s.

The Portuguese interrupted this lucrative Indian Ocean trade. Their arrival added to the political volatility that had characterised the coastal region for many centuries. The Mijikenda allied with the Arabs and the Swahili against the Portuguese, though one or two of the Mijikenda groups (the Rabai and Chonyi) appear to have aided the Portuguese. It is also during this period that the Mijikenda begin to feature in Portuguese records.<sup>8</sup>

The first mention of the Mijikenda in these Portuguese records occurs in 1505 when Francisco d'Almeida arrived and seized Kilwa and Mombasa when they refused to pay tribute. It is recorded that during this time, 1500 African bowmen (thought by historians to have been the Mijikenda) using iron-tipped arrows smeared with lethal poison, allied with Mombasa against the Portuguese. Again in 1528-9, 5,000 African archers, again said to have been probably one of the Mijikenda groups, fought side by side with the Arab and Swahili against Nuno da Cunha and his forces, which had been refused landing permission by the ruler of Mombasa for fear the Portuguese would seize the town. In retaliation da Cunha attacked, captured and destroyed Mombasa.<sup>9</sup>

The years between 1542 and 1560, saw constant raiding of the coast of East Africa by Turkish vessels which harried Portuguese shipping vessels in the Persian Gulf. The coastal towns declared their allegiance to the Turkish Sultan; and in retaliation a Portuguese fleet was sent in 1587 to destroy the Turkish fleets and again Mombasa was burned down. In 1593, the Portuguese commissioned an Italian architect, Giovanni Battista Cairati, the Chief Engineer of the Government of India, to design Fort Jesus in Mombasa. After the building of the fort, Portuguese Christian missionary activity began along the East African coast. Augustinian missionaries established themselves in Mombasa in 1596-7, and vicars moved to the islands of Faza, Pate and Lamu in 1599. Soon after this, in 1615, the Mijikenda once again appear in Portuguese records when it was recorded that the Rabai (Arabaja) murdered Sultan Hasan Bin Ahmad in the same year. In 1631, it was reported that a Portuguese by the name of Dom Jeronimo Chingulia had Mijikenda bodyguards. During the great siege of Fort Jesus by the Swahili in 1696-98, it was reported in Portuguese records that the Chonyi 'King' sent provisions to the Portuguese in Fort Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

During the Portuguese occupation of Mombasa island, the Mijikenda often raided the island, and in order to keep them off the island, the Portuguese paid them annual tribute.<sup>11</sup> In 1728, the Portuguese were finally defeated by a combined force of Mijikenda, Swahili and Omani (Arab) people. Soon after this, Mijikenda representatives, from all nine groups, accompanied a Mombasa delegation to Oman for a final settlement.<sup>12</sup>

Mijikenda trading activities appear to have continued during the Portuguese period. In 1634, Rezende reported that the Mijikenda took amber, tobacco and opium (Rezende probably means cannabis) to Mombasa and traded it for cloth.<sup>13</sup> Rezende also noted that the Swahili had to pay tribute to the Mijikenda in order to maintain trade and to ward off Mijikenda raids. According to him the Swahili were like prisoners of the Mijikenda and could only live in security when they had paid the tribute.<sup>14</sup>

Mijikenda trading activities with the coastal towns continued until the factional wars which followed the overthrow of the Portuguese. Two Omani factions, the Busaidi and the Mazrui, each wanted to control the coast. The Mazrui had had a governor in Mombasa for some time. They also ruled in Oman. Soon after the overthrow of the Portuguese the Busaidi in Oman managed to topple the Mazrui, and immediately the Mazrui Governor of Mombasa declared his independence of Oman. The new Busaidi rulers tried unsuccessfully to have him assassinated. Civil war erupted soon after, and lasted until 1735 when the Mazrui, with the support of the Kilindini Swahili and the Mijikenda, defeated the Busaidi. They ruled until 1837, when they were ousted by the Busaidi. One group of Mazrui fled to Takaungu and another settled in Gazi in the south coast. The Mijikenda of the north coast shifted their trade to the Mazrui of Takaungu, while the Digo traded with the Mazrui of Gazi.<sup>15</sup>

Under Busaidi rule the pattern of trade changed radically. Mijikenda trading activities with Mombasa soon deteriorated since the Busaidi were not interested in establishing trading contacts with them. At the same time, slave-run plantations were being developed which meant that Mijikenda produce was no longer required. The Busaidi also began long distance trade in search of ivory and slaves, and this again effectually lessened Mijikenda ivory trade. However, they continued to trade with smaller Swahili communities, and were able to still acquire trade goods through them. Close trading partnerships developed between some Mijikenda groups and Swahili communities. One good example of this is the Digo of the south coast who had a very thriving trading link with the Vumba Swahili of the south coast.<sup>16</sup>

When the Digo first migrated to the south coast, they allied with the Vumba and developed political, economic and ritual ties.



The Vumba paid them an annual tribute and in turn the Digo provided them with ivory, timber, grains, copal, cassava, etc., in exchange for trade goods such as cloth, beads and wire. The Vumba were renowned for their magic and they often helped the Digo in rituals concerning rainmaking and ensuring the fertility of the soil. At some point they taught the Digo how to grow rice. At the enthronement of new Vumba leaders, the Digo were invited to the ceremonies and given a feast and presents of cloth. In the 1840s, combined Digo and Vumba caravans travelled inland in search of trade goods. Similar arrangements existed between other Mijikenda and Swahili groups, though this example of the Digo appears to have been an exceptionally close relationship.<sup>17</sup>

Each of the nine Mijikenda groups operated markets, or acted as middlemen between the Swahili and inland peoples. The Digo were in a good position to trade with the Swahili communities of the south coast, and one of the earliest of the Mijikenda markets was set up there where sesame, copal, coconuts, maize, etc., were exchanged for fish, cloth, beads and wire from the Swahili and grain from other Mijikenda. By the 19th century the Rabai market at Jomvu had become important and its median position between Mombasa and the Giriama and Kamba ivory trade was important. The Giriama brought ivory to Jomvu where they sold it to the Swahili. The Rabai, who acted as middlemen, received a portion of the profit. The Rabai themselves conducted a sizeable trade in coconuts, copra, and palm wine. Coconut and copra were sold directly to the Swahili, while palm wine was exchanged with other Mijikenda for grain which was then sold to the Swahili. The Rabai became the palm wine suppliers to other Mijikenda groups after palms had been introduced into Rabai. Prior to this, the Digo had been the sole suppliers.<sup>18</sup>

The Duruma operated a market at Changamwe where they sold sorghum, maize, millet and copal. They also acted as brokers for the Kamba traders and controlled their part of the caravan route to Ukambani and Taita, requiring tribute from the traders passing through.<sup>19</sup>

The Kauma and Jibana did not conduct frequent markets and their trade was limited to supplying a few items to other Mijikenda groups. The Chonyi did limited trade with the Swahili, supplying them with copal, grain and rubber.

The Giriama were the main ivory traders among the Mijikenda. They obtained ivory from the Kamba, the Oromo, the Boni and the Chagga. The Giriama conducted a big market annually on the island of Mombasa where different groups came to buy cattle, goats, sheep, ivory and foodstuffs. Copal was another item traded to the Swahili by the Giriama. This was collected in the forests around where the Giriama lived (such as Biryaa, Godoma and the Sokoke-Arabuko forest). They also sold large quantities of foodstuffs, mainly grains, to the Swahili.<sup>20</sup>

These trading activities with non-Mijikenda, and their own local Mijikenda markets, gave the Mijikenda the means to develop a relatively stable economy; the wealth accrued was invested in the community and used for ritual purposes, bridewealth transactions, compensation and fines for offences committed, and for funeral and memorial feasts. The relative stability of the community as a whole was ensured to a large extent by the sharing of the same ritual, social, economic and political systems by the nine groups. Of course this does not exclude the fact that from time to time there were clashes between the nine groups, but overall they appear to have perceived themselves as belonging together.

(iii) Disintegration of the Makaya from the 1800s

From the 1800s onwards significant changes occurred in Mijikenda societies, chief among which was the migration from the fortified makaya to new areas. Three main factors contributed to this migration: (1) population growth; (2) exhaustion of land; and (3) trading activities. By this period there was a significant increase in population which the makaya could not contain. Each kaya had originally been set up as a fairly compact settlement with a probable population of 500-900. By the 1840s, this had increased substantially (the earliest estimates of the population of small makaya was made in 1848 by Rebmann who calculated it as between 900-1500). Population growth obviously motivated the need to move in search of new land. The shortage of land around the vicinity of the makaya meant that people had to expand outwards. The system of fallowing over a long period of time, in which land was used for about 4 years and then left for about 10 years for the fertility of the soil to be restored, had

resulted in the clearing of virgin land farther and farther away from each kaya. An important development at this time concerned the forming of amicable trading links with previously 'hostile' neighbours and incoming people from the north, in particular the Galla who carried out raiding activities. The new trade relationships gave the Mijikenda enough confidence to migrate to other regions without the threat of external aggression.

The Digo were the first of the Mijikenda groups to establish new settlements away from their central makaya. The first of these settlements may have been set up in the 17th century near the main kaya. (It appears that the Digo never placed the same importance on one main 'centralised' kaya residency as did other Mijikenda groups.) The new villages were built up by matriclans who expanded out of the main kaya. In 1848 Kaya Kwale had only a small number of residents and about 60-70 houses. The important makaya continued to function as ritual centres for ceremonies like initiation until the 1950s.

The Duruma moved away from Kaya Mtswakara sometime after 1850, and by 1878 it was deserted. They moved farther south, and in the 1860s they had inhabited the Taru area; twenty years later they had moved south to Mwena and Mwereni, not far from Vanga. According to Spear (1978) the Duruma had occupied an area 20 to 25 miles wide by 70 miles long, west of the Shimba Hills.<sup>21</sup>

The Giriama expanded north to Godoma and Biryaa in the 1840s. They increased their trading activities with the Galla, the Kamba and the Waata. By the 1890s the Giriama had spread to the southern banks of the Galana River, near Jilore, to Baricho and north to Hadu where they carried on a flourishing ivory trade with Waata.<sup>22</sup>

The Chonyi, Jibana and Ribe left their main makaya in the 1850s and 1860s, but remained close to their former settlements, where they could quickly retreat to during periods of trouble, such as during the Maasai raids of the 1870s. In 1848 Kaya Chonyi was described as a large and prosperous village with a population of about 1500 people. Less than twenty years later, it only had about 100 houses and was in a state of dilapidation. Kaya Jibana, in 1848, had a population of about 100 people but was abandoned as a residence by 1866. In the 1840s Kaya Ribe had a population of 600 to 1000, but was abandoned in 1864. Kaya Kambe had 1500 people in the 1840s and was vacated in 1856-66. Kaya Kauma had about 1000 people during

this period. In the 1840s and 1850s the Rabai vacated their makaya.<sup>23</sup>

Migration from the 1840s meant the establishment of villages headed by individuals who were not directly answerable to the Council of Elders. The men responsible for the building of new villages were usually ambitious traders whose business prowess and leadership qualities had made them rich and had subsequently gained them followers. As these relatively young traders acquired wealth and prestige, they began to agitate to break with the established political system of the kaya which was based on the age-grade system in which all social, ritual, economic and political power lay with the Council of Elders. As the traders became increasingly dissatisfied with their role within the society, conflict developed between them and the elders. Exposure to life outside the kaya appears to have contributed to the traders' desire to break away from the makaya and set up their own homes which grew, in some cases, into rich villages. Within these new villages the dependants and followers of the leaders provided the necessary labour for agricultural production. The leaders were able to buy land rights from their non-Mijikenda trading partners, and this effectively set them economically apart from the non-trading Mijikenda who still lived on communal land, i.e. land that could not be sold.<sup>24</sup> These individuals were now in a position to make their own decisions and to establish their own rules and laws; they no longer needed to consult the Council of Elders on most issues. Despite this, however, important rituals continued to be undertaken at the central makaya and any serious disputes were still brought before the Council of Elders for arbitration. The reason for this, is that people still defined themselves culturally as people from a particular kaya. A kaya thus retained its importance as a symbolic ritual centre which brought people together during major ceremonies. The main makaya retained their significance as ritual centres until the 1950s, though people do say that until quite recently elders continued to go there to conduct rainmaking ceremonies, and to offer sacrifice. Today, people continue to clear the undergrowth from the paths so that they are always accessible.

There are several examples of successful traders who set up their own villages into which they attracted a large number of

followers; some of these traders became powerful, and some gave themselves titles as a result of this. An example of such a man was a Digo trader named Mwakikonga, who in the 1840s, had a large following and dependants. He gave himself the title of kubo which became the title for his successors. After his death, three generations of kubo ruled until 1916.<sup>25</sup> Mwakikonga's brother is another good example of a trader who was able to set up his own village. This man, Mwasagnombe, broke away from Mwakikonga after a quarrel. He obtained arms from other Digo, recruited runaway slaves and led armed raids on coastal plantations to free other slaves until he had about 3,000 to 4,000 people in his village. Mwasagnombe was able to control important trade routes to the interior.<sup>26</sup> Krapf, in 1848, reported that he stayed with a Digo trader who served him food on porcelain plates with Zanzibari knives.<sup>27</sup>

A Mijikenda in this class of entrepreneurs, who became extremely wealthy, was Ngonyo of Marafa. Ngonyo's grandfather came from Digo and settled down in Kaya Giriama. He later moved to Mariakani and from here, his son, Mavuo, took up trade in Rare in 1850, and became rich through the ivory, copal, rubber and grain trade. He acquired a substantial number of dependants, some of them slaves bought from the Swahili. Ngonyo set up his home near his father and followed in his footsteps, acquiring ivory from the Waata and the Galla which he sold to the Swahili for cloth, beads and iron hoes. By 1895 Ngonyo had a thriving village of about 200 large houses, with his own house built in Arab style. There were about 1,200 people in his village.<sup>28</sup>

One consequence of trade between the Mijikenda and the Swahili was the conversion to Islam by some Mijikenda, particularly the Digo, Jibana and Kauma. It is difficult to assess precisely when and to what extent each of the nine Mijikenda groups became converted to Islam prior to the 20th century. Despite the fact that they had been in close contact with coastal Muslims since their arrival at the beginning of the 17th century in the coastal hinterland, conversion to Islam appears to have been a phenomenon of the 1840s and 1850s, periods which saw the expansion of the Mijikenda to different regions; increased trading activities with Muslim settlements; the establishment of Muslim communities near Mijikenda communities, and

the setting up of Mijikenda villages near urban areas. It appears that Islam began to spread into the rural areas in the 1850s, and the first of the Mijikenda groups to convert were the Digo, Kauma and Jibana (today the Digo and Kauma have the highest percentage of Muslims).<sup>29</sup> These three groups lived in close proximity to urban Muslim settlements. After the Mazrui were overthrown by the Busaidi and fled to Takaungu and Gazi, Kauma converts ran one of two Islamic centres for the north coast at Mtsanganiko, while the Digo of the south coast were in close touch with the Mazrui of Gazi. In the 1840s some Jibana moved nearer to urban centres and converted to Islam. All these converted Mijikenda were known as Wahaji, even though they had not made pilgrimages to Mecca to earn the title. Unlike Christian missionaries who came in the mid-1840s, Muslims appear to have tolerated and indeed to some extent participated in such local practices as exorcism and healing ceremonies. Some even took African names and included African customs in their own ceremonies. According to Salim (1973)

Muslim settlement amongst the indigenous Bantu led to the evolution of a ruling dynasty that embodied in its investiture ceremonies both Muslim and Bantu customs.<sup>30</sup>

Later, when the Christian missionaries arrived and began to openly condemn Mijikenda customs and practices, Islam, in comparison, was, indeed, sympathetic and shared some affinity with Mijikenda activities.

In short then, it can be concluded that during the pre-colonial phase, the Mijikenda had (1) a subsistence economy based on agriculture and craft production centred about the family unit, the operation of which depended on a sexual and age division of labour; (2) a social organisation based on the rika and exclusive-associations system which fostered a gerontocratic political status quo that was maintained by traditional consensus, and in whose overt participation women were largely excluded; and (3) a well-established regional and interdependent trade network, which ultimately gave rise to a wealthy class of entrepreneurs. Finally the kaya as a close-knit community started disintegrating from the 1800s onwards as a result of several factors, such as population growth; land shortage in the vicinity of the makaya; trading activities and the breakaway by relatively junior traders who set up their own

villages; and finally to some extent the Islamisation of a section of the Mijikenda. And to the extent that at least some forms of art play an important symbolic role in a close-knit community, it can be hypothesised that the disintegration of the kaya (as a social, ritual, economic and political system) may have led to a significant reduction in, and probably to the demise of, the production of certain artifacts among the Mijikenda and may have given rise to new art forms to answer the needs of the changing community.

FOOTNOTES

1. Kenya National Archives: DC/KWL/3/5: 1918-28.
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3. T. Spear, The Kaya ... Op.Cit., pp.65-66.
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5. D. Nurse and T. Spear, The Swahili: Reconstructing the History and Language of An African Society 800-1500, 1985; C.S. Nicholls, The Swahili Coast, 1971; H.N. Chittick and R.I. Rotberg (eds), East Africa and the Orient, 1975.
6. J. de Vere Allen, 'Swahili Culture Reconsidered: Some Historical Implications of the Material Culture of the Northern Kenya Coast in the 18th and 19th Centuries', Azania, 1974, pp.105-138.
7. Ibid.
8. Spear, Op.Cit., p.71; Strandes, Op.Cit., pp.217,247,253.
9. Strandes, ibid.
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12. W.F.W. Owen, Narratives of Voyages to Explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia and Madagascar, 1833, 1st Vol., pp.418n-419n.
13. J.M. Gray, 'Rezende's Description of East Africa', TNR, 23, 1947, pp.2-29.
14. Gray, Op.Cit., p.12.
15. Spear, Op.Cit., p.71; Owen, Op.Cit., p.421n.
16. Spear, Op.Cit., pp.72-73; A.I. Salim, The Swahili-Speaking Peoples of Kenya's Coast, 1973; A.C. Hollis, 'Notes on the History of Vumba, East Africa', JRAI, 1900, pp.275-298.
17. Spear, Op.Cit., pp.73,86.
18. Spear, Op.Cit., pp.85-94; T.J. Herlehy, 'Ties that Bind: Palm Wine and Blood Brotherhood at the Kenya Coast During the 19th Century', JAH, 1984, pp.285-308.
19. Spear, ibid.
20. Spear, ibid.
21. Spear, Op.Cit., p.111.
22. Spear, Op.Cit., pp.89-92.
23. Spear, Op.Cit., pp.109-110; A. Werner, 'The Bantu Coast Tribes of the East African Protectorate', JRAI, 1915, pp.342-344; C. New, Life, Wanderings and Labours in Eastern Africa, 1873, pp.76-80.
24. Spear, Op.Cit., p.117.
25. Kenya National Archives: Osborne: DC/KWL/3/5: 1918-28.
26. G.H. Osborne, 'The Wa Digo of Vanga District', n.d. KNA: DC/KWL/3/5: 1918-28, pp.216-222.



27. Spear, Op.Cit., p.86.
28. Spear, Op.Cit., p.116.
29. D.C. Sperling, The Study of Islamization Among the Mijikenda of the Coastal Region of Southern Kenya 1865-1930, 1985.
30. Salim, Op.Cit., p.29.

### Chapter Three: The Mijikenda Under British Colonialism

#### (i) Missionary Activity

The 1840s saw not only the beginning of the disintegration of the makaya and the expansion of the Mijikenda to other regions, but the arrival of the Christian missionaries to Mijikenda localities. Christian missionary activity was the precursor to British colonial rule which was to be imposed in 1895, and which was to enforce an even greater disruption of the Mijikenda traditional system.

The first Church Missionary Society station was set up in Rabai in 1846 by Johann Ludwig Krapf who arrived at the Kenya coast in 1844 after being expelled out of Ethiopia. Krapf's aim was to reach and evangelise the Galla and he hoped to be able to do so by first establishing a base in Kenya from where he could travel. The Mijikenda elders gave him permission to build the mission on their land and this became the main CMS station at the coast.

Krapf found it extremely difficult to interest the Mijikenda in Christianity; they showed no enthusiasm for it at all, despite the fact that they accepted the presence of Krapf, as demonstrated by their willingness to allow him the use of their land. Krapf felt despondent and discouraged by what he termed the Mijikenda's 'drunkenness and sensuality, the dullness and indifference'.<sup>1</sup> His assessment of them was that they had troubled themselves solely over their palm wine, rice, maize and clothes at the expense of spiritual matters. This led him to comment that

their drunkenness and materialism have completely blunted their perception of everything connected with spiritual religion.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that the Mijikenda's social activities became an easy way of explaining their unresponsive attitudes to Christianity. The fact that the Mijikenda also had their own particular perception about religion seems to have dismayed Krapf, particularly when he was confronted by elders who made remarks like 'there is no God since he is not to be seen'.<sup>3</sup> Krapf did not try to understand the Mijikenda's worldview; to him anything spiritual which was not based on Christianity was to be denounced. Unlike Islam, which the Mijikenda had been in contact with for many centuries, Christianity

was presented in a way that was intolerant of local traditions. The people and their customs were openly criticised and elders were castigated over these customs. This attitude of the missionaries provoked the elders' anger and there was a lot of ill-feeling between the two groups. One of the things that roused tension and anger against the missionaries was their refusal to respect and respond to certain Mijikenda customary events such as the sounding of a special secret friction drum (mwandza), to announce a special event. What annoyed the elders was not that the missionaries themselves refused to respond to it, but that they tried to persuade people, particularly the younger people, to ignore it. The drum was greatly feared by everyone and no one was allowed to see it; on hearing it sounding people had to run indoors and shut their doors until the elders had passed. On one occasion a delegation of elders came to see Krapf and his companion Rebmann to demand an answer as to why they had allowed a Mijikenda boy, one of the converts (and indeed the only one for many years) to disobey the sounding of the drum. These sorts of questions provoked the missionaries to decry such practices and this inevitably led to bitter words between them and the elders. The missionaries were told by the elders that the Mijikenda would never abandon their customs (ada). One elder told Krapf

as little as you can make my finger when cut off grow again to my hand, just as little will we abandon our customs.<sup>4</sup>

Krapf was forced to conclude that the customs and festivals

bind the people together; for none may be absent from these festive meetings but at the risk of being fined a goat or a cow; and thus they form strong bulwarks against missionary labour.<sup>5</sup>

This very revealing statement by Krapf demonstrates the power of the elders and their control over the people, and the importance of customary practice in giving people a sense of identity as a group within the political system. It seems that existing political and religious traditions supplied the Mijikenda with all that they needed, such that they had no motivation, therefore, to embrace Christianity.

Sometimes the missionaries were pleased to have the Mijikenda people coming to listen to their gospel stories, but would be

baffled and angered by the Mijikenda's evident amusement at these stories. For instance, Charles New found that his gospel stories always attracted an audience of avid listeners and he would be encouraged to think that the gospel message was finding its way to responsive hearts and making a good impression, only to be confronted at the end of the stories with a question such as 'aren't you a liar?' New himself had noted that story-telling (masumarire as he called it) among the Mijikenda was common and he had noted that the narrators were

always claiming the privilege of enlargement and embellishment to any extent their ungoverned imaginations may lead them. The more extravagant the story the better, of course, it is relished.<sup>6</sup>

What New failed to perceive was that the Mijikenda were probably only interested in his stories as a pastime activity, since this was one of the popular art forms. He also did not understand the importance of what he termed 'enlargement and embellishment' and that it was the techniques of tone, gesture, pause, use of words, that built the reputation of a narrator and which consequently attracted a keen audience.<sup>7</sup>

As the missionaries failed to recruit the Mijikenda, they began to turn their attention to runaway slaves, but continued to live and work amongst the Mijikenda. In 1873 Britain concluded a treaty with the Sultan of Zanzibar legally abolishing the slave trade, and two years later a settlement was founded by the missionaries for the freed slaves. The settlement was named Freretown, after Sir Bartle Frere who had been the chief negotiator in the Treaty of Abolition with Zanzibar. W.S. Price, head of a similar settlement in Bombay which was founded in 1855 for ex-African slaves freed from Arab dhows, came to help Rebmann run Freretown. Price brought with him about 150 converts known as 'Bombay Africans'.<sup>8</sup>

Since there is no concrete information on the interaction that may have taken place between the Mijikenda, the missionaries and the converts, it is difficult to discuss the precise relationships that must have developed between them. What did happen, however, was that settlements composed of foreigners sprung up in Mijikenda areas, particularly in Rabai and Ribe. Missionaries set up plantations run by ex-slaves. Later, ex-slaves began to dominate some Mijikenda

land, and later still they engaged in copra trade, thus limiting Mijikenda trade in this crop. As the population of missions increased, missions acquired more Mijikenda land, some of which was used by converts to grow cash crops as a way of supplementing their meagre mission wages. The Mijikenda must have felt threatened by the influx of foreigners to their areas, especially when they started occupying more and more Mijikenda land.

The Mijikenda must also have been exposed to the contradictions that developed between Christian ideals and missionary practice within the missions themselves, as a result of which some converts broke away from the missions. The politics of Freretown is a good case in point. A definite hierarchical system existed in the CMS, in which European missionaries occupied the position at the apex; the 'Bombay Africans' were in the middle position while local converts were at the lowest. Tensions first developed between the European missionaries and the 'Bombay Africans' as a result of the elitism which accorded the Europeans greater material wealth and gave them virtual control over both the 'Bombay Africans' and the freed slaves. The African (not Mijikenda, but ex-slaves from the interior of East Africa) pastors were doing the same job as the European missionaries, yet they were never permitted the power or privileges which their European counterparts enjoyed. By about 1882 some 'Bombay Africans' had left the CMS to look for better paid jobs elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Dissatisfaction also began to be expressed by the freed slaves whose gradual acquisition of a limited education prompted them to look for more satisfactory economic prospects outside the missions. Because they were recruited as teachers or catechists they expected to be better treated, but they were badly paid and as a result many of them resigned. When the Imperial East Africa Company was established in 1888 many ex-converts (some remained Christians, some did not) took up jobs with the company, and in fact the missions became a recruiting centre for workers who had some knowledge in language and clerical duties.

Another point of conflict between the European missionaries and converts concerned clothing and social behaviour. Initially traditional clothing was frowned upon and cultural customs denounced; the African converts were encouraged to emulate the European mode of dress and were taught some English. However, as the converts

learned to converse in English and to acquire a taste for European materialism, the white missionaries began to feel uneasy and threatened by this, and even more, by the converts' assertiveness and fight for independence. Accordingly, the converts were forbidden to wear European-type clothing and were required to wear waist-clothes so as not to imagine that Christianity consisted of 'wearing a pair of trousers'.<sup>10</sup> In 1895 a circular was issued by Bishop Tucker calling on all missionaries to discourage the indulgence of European luxuries of food, dress or shoes. Furthermore all African teachers at Freretown were expected to wear a kanzu, a long white garment which was disliked by the wearers because of its associations with Arab and Swahili slave traders. Language was another point of contention. At first the speaking of English was encouraged, but later its use was also discouraged for similar reasons, that the African converts were trying to become like Europeans.<sup>11</sup> Only very limited education was offered, though some missionaries felt that at some point Africans would have to be allowed to learn more, since they would eventually take over evangelical work. Education was restricted to technical subjects such as carpentry, basket-making and mat-making. Converts also had to cultivate the mission farms.

The many contradictions drove some converts to found their own villages. In 1878, a group of African Christians set up their own settlement at Fulladoyo and it became a popular centre for both runaway slaves and converts. It grew into a prosperous settlement with a church, well-built houses and well-cultivated farms plots. It had a population of about 500 people. Morning and evening prayers were held in the church. The settlement was not popular with the Arabs and Swahili who saw it as a threat to their illegal slave trade. In 1881, the Takaungu Swahili tried unsuccessfully to persuade the non-Christian Mijikenda, in this case the Giriama, to attack the village. The village was attacked in 1883 by the Swahili.<sup>12</sup> By this time too, the 'Bombay Africans' had bought pieces of land or taken up petty trade to supplement their meagre wages. As indicated earlier, the missions themselves had expanded their land holding and owned hundreds of acres in some cases, which were used for growing cash crops such as coconuts and rubber.

The obvious antagonisms that were prevalent in the missions and

the renouncing of Christianity by some converts, must have strengthened the Mijikenda's view that there was nothing much to be gained from Christianity. (It must be remembered that there were few Mijikenda Christians.) It is not easy, of course, to explain the real reasons behind the Mijikenda's reluctance to embrace Christianity. Put into the context of the Mijikenda's ritual, social, economic and political system the missionaries had nothing new or of major benefit to offer them. Compared with the relevance of Islam in the context of trade (at least partially), missionaries would have appeared to be simply taking from the Mijikenda (i.e. land) without giving anything concrete in return. The land issue was later to become a major source of contention between the missionaries, converts and the Mijikenda; the Mijikenda had permitted the alien groups to use land under their system of mortgage and did not intend to sell it, but the missionaries did not understand the system and thought they had bought the land. Another conflict lay in the missionaries open condemnation of Mijikenda customs and their blatant encouragement of young people to ignore the elders. The customs, as Krapf himself had noted, formed strong bulwarks against missionary endeavour. These and other factors appear to have contributed to the general rejection of Christianity by the Mijikenda. But the foreign communities also contributed to disruption in the Mijikenda communities, such as the growth of an alien population which pushed them off more and more of their land.

(ii) Colonial Rule

Nearly fifty years after the setting up of the first CMS station, colonial rule was imposed in 1895 in Kenya. Three years later, the first colonial administration post was established in Rabai. Between 1898 and 1913, the colonial administration tried to bring the people into a central administrative structure. One of the first demands by the government was that the Mijikenda should provide labour for the building of the roads and for the railway, and later for British plantations. Because of the difficulty in recruiting the Mijikenda and other people in the area, various measures were introduced to coerce them to respond to these demands.

In 1901 and 1902 the Hut Tax Ordinance and the Village Headmen Ordinance were imposed as a method by which the people would be forced to provide labour.

The Hut Tax Ordinance required everyone to pay, in cash, a tax on each of the homes they occupied. The only way people could earn cash was through trade or through the wage market. Initially the Hut Tax Ordinance was not successful; people would just vacate their homes during tax collection. These acts of defiance angered the British administration and as a result district officers, or their assistants, were often authorised to burn villages found deserted during tax collection. Such punitive acts were supposed to demonstrate British authority and to instil a 'profound effect' on the people so that they would pay their tax to avoid having their villages burnt.<sup>13</sup>

The Village Headmen Ordinance was a tool of indirect rule. This was brought in to replace the customary system of Council of Elders. Under the Village Headmen Ordinance Act an appointed 'headman' would be empowered to act on behalf of the government. Thus the power vested in the Council of Elders was eventually to be transferred to one person who was an agent for the colonial government. The 'headman's' responsibilities lay in liaising between the people and the British administration; he was to help in the recruitment of labourers, and to act as an informer against his own people. He was held accountable for the implementation of British policies at the village level. What the administration failed to perceive was the possibility of the 'headmen' being distrusted and ignored by their own people because they were not chosen by the people themselves, and were, more importantly, acting against the established system of collective leadership, based on the Council of Elders. For this reason these appointed 'headmen' lacked both confidence and authority, and consequently found it difficult to enforce government orders or 'discipline'. As a result they resorted to employing non-Mijikenda to act as retainers. These retainers, according to district reports, were a 'source of considerable trouble in the district'.<sup>14</sup>

Since the government found it so difficult to recruit labour, it was suggested that the Mijikenda be forced to carry the administrators' loads and to help in the building of their district



stations, with the hope that this would accustom the young men to the idea of work. An administrator said at the time that 'something more will, however, have to be done before this tribe produces a regular labour supply of any magnitude'.<sup>15</sup>

By 1913, the Mijikenda were protesting openly against the stringent measures (taxes and forced labour, for example) introduced by the colonial government. Opposition to these policies and measures took such form as the refusal to pay tax, the refusal to supply food and porters for district officers, and refusal by the elders to assemble when instructed to do so. The consequences of these acts of defiance led to the enforcement of police units in the districts. In a society that had never before experienced a police force, anger and bitterness were inevitable, and relations between the people and the administration were bad. In 1913 the District Officer in Giriama district informed the elders that the British government intended to support the work of the Council of Elders in maintaining peace and good order, and that it intended to look upon the elders as an executive power and not merely as a judicial body, and that they would be required to assist in hut tax collections, the upkeep of the roads, the digging of wells, the improvement of agriculture and the suppression of drinking among the young men.<sup>16</sup> However, since the colonial measures became more and more stringent, the people openly rebelled.

One of the first leaders of anti-colonial policies was a Giriama woman named Mekatilili who in 1913, together with a male supporter, instigated the people to oppose the policies, urging them to go to the kaya and offer sacrifices. The British administration called her a 'witch'. The British District Officer in Giriama District stated that it was 'probable that the medicine-men or "waganga" who are generally more awake than the common herd have instigated the people to the policy of opposition to Government'.<sup>17</sup> Mekatilili's meeting invoked a lot of anger and a police squad was sent to quell the trouble. In the process, a Giriama was shot dead when police opened fire on a charging group of young men. Mekatilili and her supporter, Wanyi wa Madori, were arrested and exiled to Mumias in the Western Province of Kenya where they were imprisoned for over five years. Several people were also imprisoned in Giriama district.

In 1914 the colonial government yet again came up with more demands. They proposed to evacuate the Giriama from the Sabaka River area, and expected the Giriama to supply 1,000 porters for the Carrier Corps for the impending war. These demands yet again brought protests. The proposed evacuation brought protests not only from the Mijikenda but from the Indians and Arabs of Mambrui who were dependent on Mijikenda grain. They sent a petition to the British urging that the evacuation should not take place since Mambrui would be hard hit. The government ignored the petition. The government had been quick to notice that the Sabaki River area was fertile and highly suitable for British settlement. It noted that at least 5,000 people had taken advantage of the fact that they were entirely free of British control and that they had wandered over an extensive and fertile area which as 'entirely outside their traditional tribal location'.<sup>18</sup> The government stated that the people could not be permitted to remain in occupation of the Sabaki River region because they could not be effectively controlled unless they were all 'concentrated and retained' within the area to which they were 'rightfully entitled' and because they were occupying an 'extensive area of land which must be rendered available for white cultivation'.<sup>19</sup> As can be imagined the Mijikenda had moved to this area and had established thriving grain plantations, and to be told to vacate their rightful land was bound to provoke them to protest. Together with the demand for porters, the above evacuation drove people to the main kaya (in this case the Kaya Fungo, the Giriama's main kaya) where people were urged by the elders to rebel against the British and their policies.

By August 1914 the colonial administration had decided to destroy Kaya Fungo which was described as a 'seat of sedition'.<sup>20</sup> The administration felt that the only way to induce the Giriama to abandon the kaya was to destroy it. The Acting Provincial Commissioner stressed that the destruction should be impressive in order to instil a lasting moral effect upon the Mijikenda. The Provincial Commissioners wrote to the executive engineer in the Public Works Department Mombasa on 20th July 1914 informing him that

His Excellency has sanctioned the destruction of Kaya Fungu (a native place of ceremony) in Giriama on August 4th and

that the actual work of destruction of the trees by dynamite<sup>21</sup> be undertaken by an overseer of the Public Works Department.

On 28th July 1914, the Acting Provincial Commissioners instructed the Assistant District Commissioner of Giriama to be accompanied by the Assistant District Commissioner of Rabai, to meet at Kaya Fungu with the Giriama elders and that he should fully explain to them the reasons for which they had been called together and to make it clear that the Government was not reversing its policy of recognising native institutions; furthermore that they had been warned to abandon Kaya Fungu and to start a new kaya within the limits of their own reserve, but had 'wilfully' disobeyed the orders. The kaya was completely destroyed, and the burning down of the trees was, in the eyes of the Giriama, an act of gross sacrilege. A tradition had developed whereby no trees around the sacred kaya complexes could be cut down; to do so was to evoke the anger of the elders and the offender faced a very stiff penalty.

The destruction of the kaya, the proposed evacuation from the Sabaki region and an order that they should provide 1,000 porters, drove the Giriama to take up armed struggle against the British, but they were defeated because they did not have sophisticated firearms.

The evacuation of the Mijikenda was brutal; armed patrols forcefully removed the people and burnt their homes. The people were expected to rebuild their homes in very inadequately planned settlements vastly inferior to their former ones (Cooper 1977: 22). The grain growers were moved to lands which were unproductive, and which were too far removed from their normal markets. Many Mijikenda, as a result of these coercive measures, were ultimately forced to become labourers and most of these acquired squatter status as they had no other alternatives. Such inhuman measures meant that the British economy would develop at the expense of the people who would provide the necessary labour for privately-owned and European-run plantations. In order for the British economy to develop without any hindrance, the African mode of economic production had to be completely destroyed and alienated so that

the British Protectorate economy, which relegated Africans to the role of wage labourers set up structures that would

eventually undermine the economic system based on Africans as producers.<sup>22</sup>

Only those Africans who were wage earning labourers on private lands were allowed to plant subsistence crops. Arabs were forbidden to rent land to the Mijikenda, in particular to the Giriama, but could hire people for wages. It was important that together with the destruction of the economic structures and the alienation of productive land, the social and political structures had to be stifled and suppressed to allow the British to entrench themselves firmly along the coast, and eventually in the whole of Kenya.

Social activities also came under attack. They were often described as indecent, and prohibitions were very often enforced. Dances were often described as immoral by missionaries and settlers and Provincial Commissioners were often urged to ban such dances. In the minutes of the Provincial Commissioner's meeting of 1920 it is noted that the missionaries had asked the P.C. to prohibit 'native dances' on moral grounds and that the settlers had asked for the same on the grounds that dancing interfered with the labour supply. The decision taken at the meeting was that it would not be advisable for the administration to interfere with dancing (day or night) where indulged in to a reasonable extent only, 'unless any dance was shown to be actually detrimental to the moral welfare of the community'. The meeting recommended that the missionaries should name the particular dances they considered immoral and these would be investigated and if found to be so would be banned.<sup>23</sup> This is one episode where the government seemed reasonably fair in its decision. Various bills were brought in to penalise drinking and dealers were required to be licensed. Whatever prohibitions were introduced were done to benefit the colonial government and settlers. For example, in 1913, a District Commissioner stated that 'it will not be disputed that the production of copra is far more beneficial to a country than the production of tembo'. This was said in regard to palm wine which was tapped and drunk by the Mijikenda and used for ritual purposes. An Ordinance was introduced as early as 1907 to take care of this; this was called the Native Liquor Ordinance. It provided for the imposition of a tax on the sale of any native intoxicating liquor by requiring every vendor of such liquor to take out a licence.<sup>24</sup>

In conclusion, the stringent policies introduced by the colonial government had the effect of destroying many aspects of Mijikenda society. The rigours of a new colonial (capitalist) economy with its forced labour policies were at once striking a death blow at the traditional (pre-capitalist) mode of production and leading to increased proletarianism (in the Arab and European plantations, road constructions, etc.) for a substantial section of the Mijikenda. The introduction of levies acutely affected the Mijikenda who had never before experienced anything like it (in fact they were used to receiving tribute from foreigners). Another factor which affected the Mijikenda was the recruitment of Arabs and Swahilis to work alongside the European administrators in any dealings with the Mijikenda. This 'divide and rule' policy was bound to create conflicts between these former allies, since the Arabs and Swahilis were accorded privileges and a status well above the Africans. As early as 1896, Hardinge had written to Salisbury that he regarded the Arabs and 'Arabished' Swahilis as the 'one civilized element which stands between us and the utterly barbarous races of the interior'.<sup>25</sup> The former trading alliance between these people and the Mijikenda lapsed and it was not long before many of the Mijikenda found themselves no longer in control of their own economy; the most ironical twist of events was that they became squatters on their own land, the very land on which they had previously built up a relatively stable economy, prior to colonialism.

Despite all these different measures and conditions which confronted the Mijikenda the production of certain material artifacts continued. Although one can assume that it is likely that some modifications took place, nevertheless the form of basic items, such as household artifacts, as well as ritual objects like vigango remained more or less the same. This is a testament to the resilience of cultural activities even under the most oppressive of conditions.

FOOTNOTES

1. J.L. Krapf, Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa, 1860, p.40.
2. Krapf, Op.Cit., p.147.
3. Krapf, Op.Cit., p.140.
4. Krapf, Op.Cit., p.204.
5. Krapf, *ibid*.
6. C. New, Life, Wanderings and Labours in Eastern Africa, 1873, p.14.
7. R.M. Rassner, Narrative Rhythms of Giriama Ngano, 1980.
8. R. Strayer, The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa, 1978.
9. Strayer, Op.Cit., p.15.
10. Strayer, Op.Cit., p.26.
11. *Ibid*.
12. Spear, The Kaya Complex ... p.120.
13. Kenya National Archives: DC/KFI/3/1: 1913.
14. KNA: DC/KWL/3/5: 1918-28.
15. KNA: DC/KFI/3/1: 1913.
16. *Ibid*.
17. *Ibid*.
18. KNA: PC/COAST/1/12/161: 1914.
19. *Ibid*.
20. KNA: Hobley: PC/COAST/1/12/161: 1914.
21. *Ibid*.
22. C. Brantley, The Giriama and Colonial Resistance in Kenya 1800-1920, 1981.
23. KNA: No.1359/13: 1920: Annual Reports for 1912-13, Kilifi District.
24. KNA: PC/COAST/1/10/11: 1907-1908.
25. FOCP/684a/XLV 184-5.

#### Chapter Four: The Mijikenda in Post-Colonial Kenya

The post-colonial policies that have a direct bearing on the material culture, and on the ritual organisations, of the Mijikenda are those that have been carried over from the colonial era. In addition, the overall policies (economic, political, educational and otherwise) of the post-colonial government are such that they have an overriding effect on the broad spectrum of 'traditional' aspects of the different communities of Kenya. No matter how remote a rural community is, it will be affected by these policies. Therefore, in this discussion, it should be borne in mind that only those policies most immediately relevant to a particular subject, i.e. material culture, are being used to illustrate the effects of the post-colonial era.

It does not, of course, exclude the fact that in addition to this group of policies, there are others that also have a consequence on the structures of the 'traditional' societies. In this context, it is worth remembering that Kenya is a dependent capitalist society, and that its economy is dominated by Transnational Corporations (TNCs).<sup>1</sup> Over the years, TNCs have partly alienated the traditional production of artifacts and have brought in mass-produced goods which are now threatening the remaining material cultures of the various peoples. This is just one example of one type of effect of new policies within Kenya.

One Act which directly affects the Mijikenda traditional institutions (and other Kenyan communities) is the Chief's Authority Act (Cap. 128 of 1970).<sup>2</sup> This Act was first introduced by the colonial government in 1937 to serve as a local (African) administrative support for the colonial status quo. In the post-colonial era this Act has been preserved almost intact with only minor revisions. The Chief's Authority Act accords a chief wide-ranging legislative, judicial and punitive powers. Those that have a direct relevance on traditional institutions are enumerated in section 10 of the Act and include among other things:

- (a) prohibiting or restricting the manufacture, distilling, consumption or possession of native intoxicating liquors and the supply of such liquors to young persons;

- (b) prohibiting or restricting excessive dancing by persons or the public performance of any dance of indecent or immoral character or of such nature that it is likely to lead to immorality or a breach of the peace, and determining the hours within which, the place or places at which and the conditions under which any dance may be publicly performed.

The Act does not define what is meant by 'indecent' or 'immoral'. During the colonial period it was usually the settlers and missionaries who were at the forefront in a drive to get the government to ban native dances.

The Act makes it clear further that

any person who without lawful excuse disobeys or fails to comply with any lawful order issued or given by a Chief or Sub-Chief under this Act, or by any administrative officer under Section 17 of this Act, shall be guilty of an offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two months or to a fine not exceeding one hundred and fifty shillings, and in default of payment exceeding two months, or to both such fine and such imprisonment.<sup>3</sup>

The Act also caters for the imprisonment of a chief or sub-chief if they refuse to meet their senior officers, or if they neglect to exercise their powers or to issue orders. The unfortunate thing is that the Act is not accessible to most people, and as it stands is beyond their comprehension. Often a person is charged with a crime he/she has unknowingly committed.

As in the colonial days the chiefs continue to assume an essentially authoritarian stand against the people. The situation worsens when the chief sides with one politician against another. At this political level the chiefs coerce people to attend political rallies; and any person who refuses to attend is liable to prosecution. This particular power of the chief is explicitly stated in Section 11(e) of the Act:

any chief may from time to time issue orders to be obeyed by the persons residing within the local limits of his jurisdiction for any of the purposes following -  
... requiring persons to attend, for any purpose in the interest of good government, before an administrative office, liwali or mudir, at any time and at any place appointed by him, or before himself at any place within the local limits of his jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup>



Again the above is essentially a colonial requirement during which the Arab liwali and mudir had greater powers than the Africans and worked directly under the European officers. In post-colonial Kenya this section is applicable to politicians. Thus, political leaders can summon chiefs and instruct them to assemble large audiences for political rallies, particularly those attended by Parliamentary ministers or the President.

The intimidation wrought by the Chief's Act was in evidence during my field research. The sub-chief once offered to accompany me to the home of a recently bereaved family and later to the home of a craftsman. At both homes the people were very reluctant to answer questions because they thought we had come as government officials, and according to the sub-chief they thought we were checking on illegal activities such as the tapping and drinking of palm wine. Despite the fact that the sub-chief assured them that this was not the case, the interviews were unsuccessful. A few days later I returned to one of the homes and explained the reasons for my research. Ultimately the interview went very well and the craftsman admitted that since I had come with the sub-chief they were convinced I was a government official. The men of the home had many complaints about the incumbent chief, but appeared more favourably disposed towards the sub-chief.

A very recent example of the powers of a chief occurs in an article which appeared in the Standard of 14th April 1986.<sup>5</sup> According to the article, the Chief for Ithiru Location in Kandara Division of Murang'a District, Mr Karatu Chege, 'has banned social gatherings in his area except in churches'. According to the article, the Chief said the ban 'included burial ceremonies and weddings for which permission had to be obtained from him'; he went on to say that monitoring of worshippers would also be carried out to ensure they were not 'misled by some preachers who might want to misuse the pulpit'. The Chief also warned that 'those who would defy the order would be arrested'.

As can be seen, the chief can impose his authority whenever it suits him, or whenever there appears to be political disturbance at the village level.

The President has the prerogative to issue directives at any time. One of the most recent of these directives was issued against

the Mijikenda early in Moi's Presidency, when he imposed a ban on the tapping and drinking of palm wine. The ban has affected the Mijikenda in many ways. Many people have been imprisoned for tapping or drinking it. According to the Mijikenda palm wine is life itself. Not only does it serve as a source of income of many rural Mijikenda families, it is important in all ceremonial and ritual activities, and no ceremony or ritual is conceivable in the Mijikenda communities without palm wine. The Presidential decree against palm wine is reminiscent of the colonial policies aimed at stopping and making illegal the tapping and the drinking of it. As was pointed out in Chapter three the question of 'native liquor' was a constantly recurring theme amongst the settlers and the missionaries. The reasons behind the recent ban have been said to be based on moral and health grounds (similar grounds put forward by the colonial government); it has been suggested that people spend far too much time drinking and are, therefore, in danger of being morally corrupted and irresponsible as a result. As far as health is concerned, it has been said that palm wine is unhygienic, and has been placed in the same category as illicit brews which are often produced under unhygienic conditions. The reasons behind the prohibition are probably to be found in the political and economic spheres.

Whatever the motive behind the banning of the palm wine, the Mijikenda feel that they have been deprived of a customary drink which not only has ritual value, but an economic one. During the course of field work, people openly said that no matter what government pressure was used on them they would continue to drink palm wine, and some went as far as saying that even if they were imprisoned (as has happened frequently) for tapping or drinking it they would take it up once they left prison. What is evident in the Mijikenda rural areas, is the presence of police patrols who make sudden swoops on illicit tapping. People must apply to the chief for permission to use palm wine during ritual and ceremonial occasions. Some people pointed out that people like the former M.P. Hon. Ronald Ngala would never have had an education if it had not been for palm wine which was the source of the school fees.

Modern education is another area which is having a detrimental effect on Mijikenda traditional institutions. The gradual

acquisition of modern education is tending to alienate more and more people from their rural communities; many of the educated, or partially educated, end up finding employment in urban areas. This sector becomes 'westernised' and as a result no longer has need for the traditional aspects, be they artifactual, ritual or ceremonial. This is very evident in Mijikenda communities, and indeed throughout Kenya as a whole. From January 1984 a new educational system, called the 8-4-4, was established in Kenya, partly with the aim of making education more sensitive to local conditions and needs. The new system has a strong technical dimension to it and includes practical areas like carpentry, masonry, mechanics and so forth. It also introduces the students to traditional material culture as a basis for further creativity.

Together with all the above factors, the demise of material culture and social institutions is beginning to become more obvious as more and more mass-produced goods enter the rural areas, and as more and more 'western-type' values replace the traditional ones. As will be seen in a later section on the marginalisation of Mijikenda material culture and associated institutions, the prevailing conditions are forcing people to abandon what is deemed 'old fashioned' or not 'modern'. At the same time, though, new markets are being created for some Mijikenda artifacts, such as the tourist market for example, which is generating the production of objects like vigango (still used in ritual contexts), baskets, mats and so forth. Though these objects are being produced out of their social context, at least the continuation of the forms is assured for the time being.

FOOTNOTES

1. For relevant discussion on Kenya's economic and political dependency relationship with the capitalist west and TNCs, see C. Leys, Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Colonialism, 1964-1971, 1975; Nicola Swainson, The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918-77, 1980; O. Odinga, Not Yet Uhuru, 1967; G. Kitching, Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of an African Petite-Bourgeoisie, 1905-1970, 1980.
2. The Chief's Authority Act, Cap.128, Rev.1970 (Government Printers, Republic of Kenya), Sections 10,17,11(e).
3. Op.Cit., Section 18, p.9.
4. Op.Cit., Section 11e, pp.5-6.
5. The Standard (Nairobi) 4th April, 1986.

PART TWO

PRODUCTION AND TECHNOLOGY

Chapter Five: Production

(i) Classification of Artifacts and Makers

There are a great many artifacts still considered necessary for ritual, aesthetic or utilitarian purposes, which continue to be manufactured within Mijikenda communities.

The production of these artifacts, however, does not appear to have stimulated the development of an economy sufficiently diversified as to permit the formation of well-established workshops or guilds in which producers utilise their skills in full-time production, or at least a greater portion of their time. Most basic objects used by the Mijikenda are produced in many cases by individuals for themselves, or commissioned from others with the necessary skills. In some Mijikenda rural areas, people interviewed said that most people are so preoccupied with agriculture and house-related chores that they usually have little time for other activities. After farmwork some people utilise the rest of their time in petty trade (selling tobacco, meat, fish or vegetables) to get cash for other basic foodstuffs, clothing, school fees and so forth, or the time is spent doing work around the home. Occasionally there are those who are able to engage in and who perceive themselves as engaging in artifact production as a form of relaxation, but this situation is usually applicable only to elders, who may spend time plaiting palmleaf strips for baskets and mats. The production of most artifacts is never a leisure time activity; the production of an object is to serve a particular purpose.

Over a long period of time, the production of utilitarian, ritual and aesthetic objects in Mijikenda villages has nevertheless been on a steady decline due to changes in the society as a whole as it has been drawn more and more into a centralised government machinery. In looking at the production, use, form etc., of

Mijikenda products it is important to bear in mind that many Mijikenda communities are now within close proximity to trade centres, government health clinics, government co-operatives, government administration posts (with Chiefs, Sub-Chiefs and Administration police) and schools. Furthermore, there is active government pressure to get people to send their children to school, and in some areas adult literacy classes have been established. There are welfare officers who make visits to villages to advise women on family planning methods, health etc. In many cases people are being constantly urged by government officials, particularly local M.P.s, to discard traditional beliefs and practices, which may hinder the process of modernisation or 'development'. With the increasing development and demands of urbanisation, therefore, communities have inevitably been modified to cope with these changes; and since the process of change usually creates new expectations, this means that there is a rise in the demand for novel goods and values so that, sooner or later, a time comes when traditional values and artifacts no longer have a place in the community. With the importation of factory-manufactured items like plastic buckets and containers, glass bottles and the like, the traditional material culture of the Mijikenda is increasingly marginalised. It is no longer an uncommon sight to see rural people wearing wrist watches and shop-bought jewellery, nor is it unusual to see transistor radios in the villages. One is tempted to say that such artifacts are now part of Mijikenda tradition.

Most Mijikenda makers interviewed said they were self-taught, acquiring their skills from watching others and from practice. Some said knowledge is often passed on from father to son, mother to daughter, and from skilled producers to apprentices. One informant explained that if someone is very interested in a particular activity he or she will practice it until he or she is proficient in it, and that in this way one really learns if one enjoys doing the work.

There is a degree of specialisation in the production of most artifacts. Specialisation appears to develop out of a deep interest in the production of certain items. Among the Mijikenda, anyone considered a skilled craftsman (fundi) usually has the ability to produce most items, with the possible exception of metal-work which

is highly specialised. It may happen that a specialist metalworker is also proficient in a wide range of activities, such as drum-making, furniture-making and utensil-making. Makers become known as a result of their particular skill. Some acquire such a reputation that they are often named after their specialisation or the particular item they are good at making. For example, Karisa wa Nanje of Shariani, is well-known as a maker of a type of aluminium ear-plug called kifufu; as a result people often refer to him as Karisa Kifufu.

Because of this overlapping of skills, it is difficult to place artifact producers into any fixed categories, and in any case there is no formal categorisation of producers in Mijikenda terms. However a loose categorisation can be attempted for most objects, the result of which is the placing of producers into loose categories of non-specialist, informal specialist, and artifact producers only within a well-defined ritual context.

In the first of these categories are things which most people can make, though some are better at it than others. People are not restricted by ritual considerations in the making of these objects. Items in this category are mainly wooden spoons, hoe handles, baskets, mats, calabash containers, and most types of beadwork for personal use. People make them for themselves, i.e. for their own personal consumption, but also for others.

In the second category are things which are considered as demanding additional skill that in practice only a few people acquire (though anyone, in principle, might do so). The production of these objects is regarded as requiring a great deal of concentration upon the acquisition and practices of skills, which for that very reason are not available to everyone, in the sense that most people are not able to or motivated to devote that kind of time and energy. Within this category fall such skilled people as metalworkers, masons, carpenters, woodcarvers, drum-makers and makers of certain beadwork.

Metalwork, using copper, brass, aluminium and iron obviously requires a maker to have a knowledge of the properties of these metals and the techniques of smelting and forging. Metalworkers often specialise in one particular item, but there are those who specialise in several. Some craftsmen make metal beads; others

make chains; yet others make earplugs; and others specialise in tools. It is possible to find several craftsmen living close to each other who all specialise in different metal items. Sometimes this creates a definite division of labour, so that one craftsman makes a chain necklace, for example, and another makes the aluminium clasp for it.

Carpenters often have the ability to make most wooden items. Some carpenters are also carvers, and likewise carvers may also engage in carpentry work. Woodcarvers make mortars and stools, and some occasionally carve stoppers for medicine containers. They may also carve the basic drum forms, since the techniques involved are the same as those used in making items like mortars, for example. Specialist drum-makers not only require skill in carving the forms, but must know the types of wood suitable for drums and the types of membranes needed for the different types of drums.

As far as beadwork is concerned, some women acquire a reputation for being better at producing beaded armbands than other women. Because of this, rather than making their own beaded armbands many women commission them from these experts. Women who simply do not have time to make their own bead ornaments may also order them from other women.

It is rare for rural Mijikenda to hire masons to build their houses. People normally build their own homes with the help of their families and friends. However, there are skilled masons who may be hired to do the job. One mason I interviewed said he usually builds for the Arabs, Swahili and Europeans who hire him. Mijikenda masons are often hired by Europeans to construct sections of their homes which may have 'African' features such as the type of wooden beams, and thatching with palm leaves.

In the third category are those items which are commissioned in a controlled and well-defined politico-ritual context, though the artists might well be informal specialists of the second category. In the production of these objects, such as commemorative sculptures (vigango) and the luvoo bracelet, and the sacred drum (mwandza), it often happens that a sculptor who is not a member of the ritual group is commissioned and instructed by ritual experts to make these items, but he will have no part in the ritual process. Ritual experts only commission an outsider when there is no skilled



craftsman within their ritual group. In this category are also healing and divining objects, such as calabash containers with carved stoppers. A healer will commission a carver to make a stopper, but the carver will have no part in the healing process. There is a distinct division of labour in these ritual items; the craftsman makes an item which is then treated ritually by the ritual experts. There are strict regulations governing the making of ritual objects. According to Kahindi Kiangu, a Mijikenda sculptor engaged in the production of tourist art forms, he could very easily sculpt a kigango (a commemorative sculpture) for a non-Mijikenda customer who desired it as an 'art object' but he would not dare to make one intended for ritual use, because if he did so he would be cursed since he is not yet 'mature', that is, he has not yet attained the right age. However, if ritual experts were to commission him to make an item, then he would do so - their authority would remove any threat of negative or mystical sanctions.

The relationship between the maker and the person needing artifacts in this category is formal and ritual. What usually happens is that the craftsman is instructed by ritual elders and works in a secret place away from the rest of the community. No one is allowed anywhere near the place of work. If anyone should inadvertently see the work in process, then he or she is normally fined by the ritual elders.

According to elders, ritual objects were always made by craftsmen within the ritual group, but these days it may not be always possible to find such a craftsman. Only for this reason is someone outside the ritual group commissioned. Most of these elders insisted, however, that if an effort is made, a ritual expert can be found, even if he has to be brought in from afar.

#### (ii) The Participation of Women

The nature of Mijikenda society places certain expectations on women, many of which limit the activities that can be undertaken by women. Though Mijikenda society has been termed as fairly egalitarian (Spear 1978; Parkin 1972: 10-11) this is only applicable to men. The position of women in Mijikenda society is often explained as a 'traditional way of life' or as 'custom'. This has

become an accepted justification for the existing relationships between men and women. Due to their economically disadvantaged position, Mijikenda women find it difficult to challenge their status (and indeed it would be socially unacceptable), despite the fact that many women are dissatisfied with it.

Mijikenda sexual differentiation begins from an early age. At birth a baby girl is taken to the field and shown a winnowing tray, a mortar and farming implements which symbolise her future role as housewife and farmer. A baby boy is shown weapons and farming implements which mark his future role as defender of the home and farmer. The sexual differentiation becomes more and more defined as boys and girls grow up and their activities, which tend to merge when they are younger, begin to separate into activities which 'belong' to men and those that 'belong' to women.

At marriage a woman becomes totally dependent on her husband. Bridewealth paid by her husband's family obligates her to honour the marriage contract, which establishes an important concrete social relationship between her relatives and his, both close family and the extended. This relationship is cemented by the bridewealth system. The bridewealth is divided into two parts, one portion ensures the husband genetricial rights, that is, the children are legitimised by this; in the event of a divorce the children remain with their father. The second part of the bridewealth ensures the husband uxorial rights over his wife, that is, his sexual relationship with her is legitimised by this. Should the woman run away after marriage, her family is obligated to return this portion of the bridewealth. Should she want a divorce and remarries, her new husband must pay back this part of the bridewealth. The woman's brothers and father usually discourage her from 'misbehaving' or running away from her husband since it is often very difficult for them to return the bridewealth. Family obligations, the bridewealth system and inability to be economically self-sufficient prevent women from breaking their marriage, even if it is a very bad one.

According to Mijikenda men, the most valuable attributes a woman has are her procreation and labour powers and it is these which determine her bridewealth. Fathers explain that their daughters are as valuable as sons, but that when they get married they are lost to their family, and do not contribute to the building

of a family's lineage; for this reason sons are highly regarded in this respect. Mijikenda women do not inherit from their fathers because women are absorbed into their husbands' lineages, and their children belong automatically to the children's father's lineage. Should a woman's husband die, she is inherited by his brother; and occasionally she may marry outside the family. According to Mijikenda men, women are free to choose which of their husband's brothers they will marry, but the custom is for the elder brother to inherit his brother's wife or wives.

Rural Mijikenda women have no source of personal income. Sometimes, some women engage in petty trade, such as selling vegetables, cooked meat or fish, brooms or baskets in order to earn a little money which often goes into buying school uniforms and books for their children, and for buying themselves personal items, or other basic things needed by the family. Female healers (waganga) earn a little money through their profession, but the amounts are not very high. Husbands often prevent their wives from engaging in petty trade, and if they allow them to do so, they usually expect their wives to give them the money they have earned.

Rural Mijikenda women seldom have time to spend on pursuits other than their agricultural and household chores. Women engage in a variety of time-consuming chores. It is they who go out to fetch firewood, cultivate, plant, weed and harvest. Men do farm-work and repairs around the home, but they never participate in women-related chores. Discussion of the topic was greeted by men with great hilarity, despite the fact that many Mijikenda men do menial household jobs for non-Mijikenda (such as Swahili, Arabs and Europeans) which appears to be socially acceptable, but to do so in their homes is unacceptable; equally a woman would find it socially unacceptable for her husband to help her with her duties.

The most time-consuming activity is agricultural work. Women usually have their own plots (called koho) on which they grow crops for home use. They are expected to help their husbands to work the bigger family plot (munda). (Many rural people either live as squatters on Arab-owned or Swahili-owned land, on settlement schemes or on their own land which they have bought or inherited from their fathers.)

As far as the production of artifacts is concerned, most

Mijikenda women have little time to spare for it. A division of labour also exists which does not allow women to make certain items. It is not so much that it is 'taboo' for women to make these objects, but that a tradition has been established which does not expose women to the techniques involved. When men were interviewed as to why women do not carve, for example, they said that women do not know how to do it, and that anyway it is not women's work. Some men conceded that if women were taught to carve then it was possible that they might be able to do it just as well as men, but they invariably followed this statement with 'it is not women's work'. Women do not make metal ornaments, nor do they make ritual objects connected with men. Medical specialists and diviners, however, can treat men and make medicine ornaments (with the exception of certain items, such as metal ones, which require quite special skills) for them. Elderly women who are said to have reached the 'mbono' age (that is, they have been ritually blessed with castor-oil) are responsible for the ritual dressing of commemorative sticks belonging to female ancestors. They are also responsible for preparing bodies of deceased women for burial.

One area in which women can express themselves artistically is in the production of intricate beadwork armbands and wristbands which are made using the twining technique. This beadwork allows women to exercise their creativity in the matter of patterns and colours. Some women become particularly well-known and it is common for other women to comment on the skills of such women, and to order their beaded bands from them. Women used to teach their daughters the techniques of beadwork, but this practice has largely died out, since few women wear these ornaments these days.

Pottery is done exclusively by women. Basketry and mat-making is sometimes done by women, though it is more common to see elderly men plaiting palm leaf strips for baskets and mats. In the past, body cicatrisation was undertaken by some women. Patterns were cicatrised on the abdomen and around the lower eyelids and sometimes on the cheeks. This artistic activity appears to have completely died out, though it may be possible to find some people in the very remote areas who continue to do it.

Elderly women were responsible for making palm leaf skirts for male initiation ceremonies when they were still practised in the

past. In present day Mijikenda communities women are the ones who prepare the material for the making of their own traditional skirts - they pleat and pound the cotton material for making the white marriage skirts called hando and the blue type called musimbiji.

Despite the demands of household and subsistence activities, one major area in which women participate is in burial and post-burial festivities. Women perform dances and participate in the singing during these ceremonies. Women musical groups, called Kifudu, perform the first set of songs and dances during the preparation of a body for burial. When the mourning feast starts, women perform during the morning and afternoon, and men perform during the night. Younger women take part in the more rigorous dances.

Old women are responsible for the young women's various customs. They also have a certain amount of influence in the community as elders, and it is they who guide the younger women in marital affairs.

During the course of field research, it was extremely difficult to interview women because they invariably refused on the grounds that their husbands had to first give them permission. They were also so tied up with their various chores, that they usually found it difficult to spare time for interviews. Most women who were interviewed were elderly ones who were not expected to do much work and, therefore, had time to spare. It is hoped that further research will reveal more about women producers of artistic objects.

## Chapter Six: Artifacts and Technology

### (i) Materials and Sources

The Mijikenda utilise a range of materials, some of which are acquired through trade and others which are found within Mijikenda localities. The imported materials are mainly textiles, beads and metal. Various raw materials like palm fibres, wood of all kinds, animal skins, varnishes, clay and red ochre are found locally.

Cloth was previously obtained through the Indian Ocean trade. These days, however, Kenyan produced textiles, of all types, are obtained by the Mijikenda from shops and markets. In the 1800s, large quantities of varied imported cloth were available at the coast, and the Mijikenda utilised some of them. The more expensive cloths, such as coloured cloth, were used exclusively by the ruling elders for ritual purposes. When I interviewed elders, they talked of old cloths the names of which are now unfamiliar to most people, particularly the younger generation. Some of these names have acquired a ritual meaning and use. The most talked of cloths, which are familiar to most Mijikenda, are the kitambi (pl. vitambi), the kaniki, the musimbiji and the bendera. The kitambi is described as having been of two types: there was a kitambi which had red and white stripes at the borders and had a black background; the other type had a white background with red and black stripes at the borders. This cloth had to have black, red and white present since these were the ritual colours of the Mijikenda. The kaniki was originally an indigo-dyed cloth which came from India. Prior to the kaniki the Mijikenda utilised the musimbiji which may have come from Mozambique.<sup>1</sup> The Mijikenda continue to refer to any dark blue cloth as kaniki and musimbiji. Sometimes a black cloth is called kaniki (blue and black colours are called by the same word). The most commonly used cloth in the 1800s was plain white calico. Calico cloth was known by different names: Sansa (also called bafuta) also came from India and was used as burial cloth; Ulaiti was from England and was used for making skirts and for waistcloths.<sup>2</sup> By 1848 these Indian and English calicoes had been replaced by American unbleached cotton which by 1850 was referred to as amerikani<sup>3</sup> by the coastal dwellers. This calico came in lengths of

30 to 32 yards by 1 yard and was retailed as waistcloth cut into two lengths called doti, each piece being four to eight yards long.<sup>4</sup> (Today, calico cloth produced in Kenya is also called amerikani.) Bendera was red Turkey twill which Mijikenda elders used for ritual purposes.

The Mijikenda used imported cloths to make their own types of garments. Women made pleated and gathered skirts from the cotton cloth, while the men wore them as waistcloths. Later the Mijikenda adopted the Swahili garment (leso) consisting of two pieces of cloth wrapped round the body. One piece of leso was composed of eight square pieces of cloth sewn together. These types of cloth were originally hand block-printed with bright colours. They had a surrounding border, and motifs in the middle section, with a motto printed across the bottom section. The most common motifs were palm trees, groups of fruit (such as oranges, pineapples), cars, monkeys, lions, houses, etc.<sup>5</sup> These cloths were printed in Zanzibar and Lamu in the 1800s, but were later replaced by machine-printed ones from Europe. The leso continues to be a very popular cloth among coastal peoples because it is made from very light cotton which is suitable for the hot climate. The most appealing aspect of the leso is the motto printed on it. These mottos are usually very succinct and have a social, political or sexual connotation; it is the content of the motto which often attracts the buyers.

The Mijikenda have always valued what they see as a good cloth. Ainsworth remarked on this in the 1890s, noting that the Africans of the interior wanted cheap serviceable cloth, and that 'they understand a superior cloth when they see it, but they want plenty for their money. By this it must not be understood that they will take cheap flimsy stuff'.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the cloth acquired from the Indian Ocean trade, the Mijikenda may also have obtained cloth from Somalia and Sofala. In 1332, Ibn Battuta recorded that fine cloths were woven at Mogadisho.<sup>7</sup> When Duarte Barbosa visited the coast at the beginning of the 16th century he noted that fine cotton was being produced at Sofala; he reported that blue or other coloured cloths of Cambay, India were unravelled and woven into Sofala cloth; this cloth was then exchanged for gold.<sup>8</sup> At some point in the 1700s-1900s cloth was manufactured on Lamu Island.<sup>9</sup>

Like cloth, beads came via the Indian Ocean trade. Many may have originated from the west coast of India, and probably great quantities came to the East African coast from the 14th to the 18th centuries.<sup>10</sup> These beads were small drawn glass types in various colours like green, yellow, red, blue and black. European beads came in from the 17th century, and by the 18th and 19th centuries there were large coarse blue, white and red-on-green types. It has been estimated that there were about four hundred varieties of beads in East Africa in the 1800s.<sup>12</sup> Beads for trade purposes were grouped together in small bundles for ease of transporting. They were grouped according to specific collective names, usually based on their colours. Thus maziwa (literally 'milk') were white in colour; majibahari ('seawater') were blue, and sami-sami (?) were a rich coral red. Various loads of beads could be used to purchase specific items. For example, one load of pink beads (golabia) weighing about 55lbs could buy about 2,500lbs of flour. A piece of amerikani was equivalent to 30 strings of beads, while one leso was worth 20 strings. The cheapest beads were called hafizi and were normally made of porcelain and of white, brick red and bright yellow. The most expensive beads were the sami-sami.<sup>13</sup>

The Mijikenda obtained wire and metal from the coastal Swahili. There are no available precise dates to indicate when these metal goods came to the coastal region, but they probably came in with the rest of the Indian Ocean trade goods, particularly with the beads and cloth. Wire of various thicknesses were used by the Mijikenda: kidindi was a wire of medium thickness; madzango was wire of the thickest kind imported; this was commonly used for arm-coils, called by the same name; kidindi cha ngandu was thin brass wire, while kidindi cha mukundua was thin copper wire. A much thinner wire than kidindi was mukodo.<sup>14</sup> It is also possible that the Mijikenda manufactured their own iron wire, from iron ore they mined themselves or obtained from the inland Kamba.

Any textiles, beads and metal used by the Mijikenda today to make artifacts come from shops or markets. In the case of metal, a lot of it comes from scrap yards. Beads are imported into Kenya from Czechoslovakia.

Wood used by the Mijikenda is found in nearby woods and forests. Because of government restrictions on the cutting down of trees,



people are required to buy their wood from government forestry stations or from licensed dealers. The Sokoke-Arabuko, Gongoni, Biryaa and Godoma forests in Mijikenda localities, are a source of different types of woods. Various types of palms are found throughout Mijikenda localities; the coconut palm is probably one of the most productive of the plants grown. It provides palm wine, coconuts, thatching material, wood for building canoes and various other structures and furnishes fibres for strings and cords. Other palms may supply fibres for making baskets, mats and cords. Colouring substances, such as red ochre, are available locally. In the past, some plants were boiled to extract dyes for cloth. Certain trees, such as the mwanga which gave yellows and greens, and the mwara which gave red, were used.

Ivory and horn used to be obtained from hunters, but these materials have been discontinued since the government imposed a ban on wildlife hunting several years ago. Membranes made from skins of wild animals such as wildpig and antelope were used, but have also been more or less discontinued, and replaced by ones made from skins of domestic animals.

(ii) Housing

The Mijikenda domestic group inhabits a compound made up of a series of houses arranged in a cluster, with the livestock enclosure, in a more or less circular pattern. The doors of the houses face inwards, opening onto the communal area at the centre. In the more traditional pattern, the house of the elder of the compound was in the centre, surrounded by fruit trees and vegetable plots. The head of the compound is known as the mwenye mudzi ('owner of the home'). He is responsible for any decisions affecting the people who live in the compound. In general, Mijikenda compounds comprise the houses of the mwenye mudzi (for himself, his senior wife and other wives) and the houses of married and unmarried sons. This pattern is tending to disappear with individual houses being built in a more scattered manner. Sons are moving away as they acquire their own plots of land which are often located far from their father's homes (see Parkin 1972: 25-29, for a more detailed analysis of Mijikenda domestic groups).

A typical traditional Mijikenda house is more or less hemispherical in shape and is entirely thatched with grass from the peak to the ground. It has a door right in the centre and no other openings (Plates: 1-3). The doorway is usually covered with a plaited screen (Plates: 7,8) during the day, and at night with a sturdier door. These days, this type of house is not common in most compounds. Some people like to construct one of these types at a new home site. It seems that during the kaya period, the only type of building which could be constructed within the kaya was this hemispherical type. This traditional type of house has given way to the rectangular type which is commonly referred to as 'Swahili/Arab' (Plates: 3-6). Other buildings constructed by the Mijikenda are simple structures such as rest-houses (kigojo) and granaries (Plate: 9). The rest-houses are simple shelters used by men and women for various activities. The men's type is called dhome ra alume (men's house) and the woman's is dhome ra ache (women's house). These buildings have open lattice walls to allow for air (Plate: 90). Women cook and eat in theirs, while men use theirs as a meeting place where they eat and drink.

The construction of buildings usually involves men, women and children. If the structure is big (such as a house) relatives and friends will help. Women are responsible for collecting the grass for thatching and for making palm leaf roofing; the palm leaves are knotted onto a horizontal wooden rod and measure about 2ft in width by 3ft in length (they are known as makuti). The men are responsible for marking out the site where the house is to be built and for cutting the wood used for the house. Boys help the men while girls help the women. Once the materials have been gathered the building can start.

Poles are driven firmly into the ground and then interwoven with thin, flexible split sticks which are tightly bound with strong fibres from a creeper called mbugu. With the traditional hemispherical house the thatch is put on in layers from the bottom up and bound with strong string. The building is constructed in such a way so that it has a granary (loft) which is directly above the hearth. The interior of the houses is very dark since there are no windows or other openings (Plates: 2-3). The 'Swahili/Arab' type of house is constructed in a simple way. Vertical poles are

driven into the ground and then horizontal poles are interwoven to create a lattice effect. Coral stones are tightly packed into the spaces between the poles. This gives the building a very solid structure which is then plastered with mud by women. The roof is finally thatched with the palm leaf roofing. Sometimes the walls of the houses are white-washed (Plates: 4-8).

(iii) Woodwork

Mijikenda terms used to describe woodcarving are kuchonga or kutsonga (to shape or to carve), and kudzora (to engrave or carve by way of ornamenting). Their term kudzora is usually used in connection with carving calabashes. The tools used in woodwork are an axe (kitsoka, pl. vitsoka), an adze (thezo/tezo), a chisel (themo/temo), and a knife (kisu, pl. visu) (Plates: 20,21). A gouge (kombe) is occasionally used to scoop out the inside of wooden bowls, mortars and drums (Fig. 5).

Simple objects like knife and hoe handles and various stirrers can be made by any person since no special skills are required. Wooden bowls, mortars, stools, commemorative sculptures and stoppers are made by specialist craftsmen. Joinery is carried out by carpenters skilled in this type of work. Some carpenters are sometimes trained to carve vigango. According to Abdalla Said of Mida, it took him eight months to learn to carve vigango, amongst other work. He now trains the children of others in carpentry, but not in carving vigango because these are ritual objects.

(a) Mortars

Mortars (kinu, pl. vinu) (Plate 10) are made from tree trunks of hardwood such as mbambakofi and mukuva. The selected tree is cut down and left for several days for the sap to dry out, after which it is shaped using an axe. A long adze is used in conjunction with a gouge to hollow and scoop out the inside. Most of these mortars are composed of two sections, a lower base and an upper section which flares out from the base. The base is frequently patterned with long, grooved lines to give an octagonal shape. Other types of mortars are simple cylindrical shapes with no patterning. The surface of the mortars are smoothed with an adze

and a knife. A mortar must be well-balanced so that it does not tip over during the pounding motion. This means that the lower section must be heavier than the main hollowed out section. A mortar stands about 2 feet to 3 feet high and usually has a depth of about 1½ feet, and a diameter of approximately 10 inches. The pestle (mutsi, pl. mitsi) is made from hardwood and is smooth with no patterning at all. The mortar basically serves the primary function of pounding grain. It is also used to pound new cotton cloth to make it smooth and crinkly. It is also used to hold a mixture of water and medicine during a spirit possession ceremony. Traditionally all brides were given mortars by their father's uncle as a wedding present to take to their new home.

With more and more trading centres springing up in Mijikenda rural areas, people sometimes find it easier to buy packaged, commercially milled maize and wheat flour. Sometimes people take their grain to be milled. These trends are beginning to limit the use of mortars.

(b) Wooden Bowls

A utensil which closely resembles the mortar in shape and manufacture is the commonly used wooden bowl (muwure, pl. mivure). This type of bowl is sometimes referred to as the 'child' of the mortar because it is a miniature version of the upper section of the mortar (Plate: 10). These wooden bowls serve several purposes; they are used primarily to serve food in and to eat from; to store various substances in; and are sometimes turned upside down and used as seats. The bowls are made in various sizes according to their use; for example, small ones are used for serving relish and the large ones for cooked maize meal or beans.

Among the Mijikenda the muwure is taken as a particular measure. In the past, payment for jobs undertaken involved a quantity of cooked food or grain served in one of these wooden bowls. In the 1900s this type of wooden bowl was called pishi and held approximately 5lbs of grain. The word pishi referred to part of a required bridewealth, and also referred to payment for a specific job. These days, muwure has replaced pishi. A maker of commemorative sculpture, for example, is given a muwure of food each day for the duration of the work, and ritual elders who

undertake certain rituals are given so many mivure of food. Traditionally the muvure was given to a bride by her parents as a wedding gift.

Despite the fact that many types of plastic plates and dishes are available in nearby shops and markets, overall the wooden bowls continue to be popular in rural homes. One reason for this is that they are very long-lasting. For instance, a man I interviewed in Kijiwetanga had several of these wooden bowls which he had made well over 30 years ago from mbambakofi wood.

#### (c) Stirrers and Ladles

There are a number of differently shaped and different sized wooden tools common to most homes (Plate:13). These objects are easy to make, so most people can simply shape them. A common stirrer is the lukutso (lufuidzo, pl. fuidzo) which is a forked stick used for whipping porridge or sour milk. It is made by taking a long stick and tying a shorter one at one end to form a cross. Sometimes these stirrers have well-shaped semicircular pieces of flat wood attached to a stick to form a four-sided stirrer. A naturally forked stick is often cut and used for the purpose.

The muiko (pl. miko) is a wooden spatulate stirrer with a long handle, used for stirring maize meal while it is cooking.

Coconut shell ladles (kipawa, pl. vipawa) are frequently used for ladling out food and drinking water. They are made from a carefully cut coconut shell which is thoroughly scraped inside and outside until it is well-smoothed. Two holes, at opposite ends, are burned through the shell using a red-hot metal rod. A tapering stick is pushed through the holes and tightly wedged in by twisting it to fit into the holes.

Factory-made spoons are rarely used in rural homes; this means that wooden ones continue to be made whenever needed.

#### (d) Tables and Chairs

Mijikenda rural communities rarely use chairs and tables. A traditional structure that comes closest to a table (that is, a solid rectangular, oblong, oval, round object with legs) is a

commonly used draining platform called uringo. This stands about 5 feet off the ground and is used for holding utensils after they have been washed. The structure consists of vertical posts driven into the ground across which are laid horizontal posts. Tables as objects to eat off are not found in most Mijikenda homes, though these days it is possible to find them in some men's meeting houses.

The types of chairs used in Mijikenda rural areas are the folding type. Chairs are usually used by men, while women and children sit on the ground on mats, on stools or logs of wood; any suitable object can serve as a seat. The folding, portable chair (kiti, pl. viti) is said by informants to have originated from the Luo of western Kenya. This type of chair is usually very small in size, having a seat that usually does not exceed 15 inches wide; the smaller ones have a seat area of 6-8 inches. These compact chairs are easily carried about; and people often carry them to funeral and other feasts. The chairs can be folded up and stacked away in a corner, or leant against a wall, so they occupy little space. People order these chairs from carpenters.

#### (e) Stools

Three-legged stools (kihi, pl. vihi) are common to rural homes (Plates: 11,12; Fig. 1). They are made from long-lasting wood like mbambakofi, mukuha, mng'ambo, and tola. The men's portable stools are made from slightly lighter wood. Men's portable stools are decorated with excised patterns, usually triangular (Plate: 12; Fig. 1) and sometimes the seat area is inlaid with metal. Women's stools are not decorated (Plate: 11). Informants explained that the reason why women's stools are not decorated is because they never leave the home compound, unlike men's stools which are carried by the owners to ceremonies and festivities. A long time ago, brides used to be given three-legged stools by their mothers to take to their new homes. Such stools were meant to be used by the women 'when cooking for her husband'. Informants said that this type of stool used to be very attractive (maridadi). One informant described it as being 'a thing of beauty' and that in the past it used to be an attractive object (kilikuwa ni kitu kizuri sana; kilikuwa maridadi sana, hapo zamani: 'it used to be a very nice thing; it used to be very attractive/decorative, long ago'). It

seems that this type of stool marked a woman's married status.

One of the informants in Shariani had two stools which he made in 1949 out of mng'ambo and tola wood. The man's stool was made out of tola wood and has excised triangular patterns (Plate: 12). The woman's stool is plain and slightly larger than the man's type (Plate: 11). The maker of the stools, Katana Nassoro, explained that this difference in size and patterning is because the man's stool is taken out of the compound while the woman's never leaves the compound.

It is noteworthy that triangular motifs similar to those used on commemorative sculptures, are used on men's stools. It is very possible that there is an underlying symbolism attached to these stools that might explain the use of triangular patterns on commemorative sculptures, i.e. vigango. It is, however, worth noting that the triangular motifs are used on objects used by women, such as in beaded bracelets and on metal ornaments.

(f) Beds

There are two types of beds in use in Mijikenda communities. One type is considered the more traditional one and is referred to as the 'fixed' type (uriri) while the other is the 'unfixed', portable type (kitanda, pl. vitanda). The beds are made from sturdy wood, usually mukuha and mbambakofi, found in nearby woods or forests. The men of the home make the uriri and if they have the skill, they also make the portable type, but otherwise this type is ordered from carpenters.

The uriri is made of four forked posts driven firmly into the floor of the house and across which are tied posts to form a frame. The frame is usually covered with a strong woven structure of palm leaf cord, but may sometimes have poles laid across the width of the frame and lashed firmly together. Skins or plaited mats are placed on top.

The portable bed has mortised corners and the frame of the bed is usually covered with a woven structure of cord. The side posts may have perforations through which cords are entered and passed across the width of the frame; these are then interwoven with cords running the length of the bed. Alternatively, a cord may be passed over and under the posts continuously until the full length of the

bed is covered with a group of cord lying across the width of the bed. Another cord is subsequently interwoven with this group. The tension of the woven structure can be adjusted by pulling on the cords at the sides of the posts. Mats or skins are placed on top of the woven fabric.

(g) Stoppers, Vigango and Mikoma

Sculptural stoppers, vidonga (sing. kidonga) made with naturalistic heads, are ordered from carvers by healers who subsequently treat them for the purpose they intend. Craftsmen specialise in the making of these stoppers (refer to the section on Healing for more information). The carvers usually use a knife for carving these stoppers.

Vigango (sing. kigango) and mikoma (sing. koma) are made under strict ritual control. Vigango may be ordered from non-ritual craftsmen who are instructed by ritual experts. Mikoma just involve the cutting of branches of certain trees for the making of them by ritual experts. They are not carved in any way (refer to the section on Vigango and Mikoma for more details).

(iv) Basketry and Matting

(a) Plaiting

No Mijikenda home would be complete without its assortment of baskets and mats made from plaited palm strips sewn together. Plaiting is an activity which can be done by most people. It is an activity which is enjoyed by elderly men and women (in the past this activity was reserved for the elders). It is more common to see Mijikenda men plaiting than women; this may be due to the fact that more men than women have the time to spend on this activity.

Baskets and mats are made using a plaiting technique, also referred to as 'oblique interlacing', in which long strips are plaited and then sewn together (Plate: 14). The Hyphaena palm (H. Coriacea, H. Thebaica and H. Crinita) locally known as mlala (pl. milala) or miaa, mkoma or mkoche, the wild date (Phoenix Reclinata) known as mukindu, and the raphia palm (Raphia Monbuttorum) called mwale, are used for making mats and baskets.



The palm leaf blade is divided into two parts, each called chane (from kuchana, to slit, to separate). Each chane is subsequently slit into three, the central piece being the finest material for plaiting. The outer parts are discarded or used for sewing the plaited strips, and for making coarse cord. The fine strips are plaited into very long bands which are neatly rolled into a coil as the plaiting proceeds. When the required length has been reached the strip is sewn to make a basket or a mat (Plate: 14,15). Some types of baskets, such as the very fine tubular ones used for straining grated coconut to get its milk, are plaited in one piece without any sewing taking place.

In most baskets and mats the technique used produces a 'plainweave' pattern in which one strip interlaces with another strip in a series of under-one over-one movements across the width of the strip. In patterned baskets and mats, the technique can be manipulated to produce twill effects (i.e. diagonal patterns). These effects can be achieved by any of the following movements in which the strips interlace with each other:

- (a) over one, under two, over one, under two, etc.
- (b) over two, under two, over two, under two, etc.
- (c) over one, under three, over one, under three, etc.
- (d) and other variations of the above.

The important consideration is to have a pattern which also provides a stable fabric. If too many strips are skipped in the interlacing process, the finished item will be weak in structure. It is rare for the Mijikenda to use coloured strips to create patterns.

Some baskets and mats are made using the weaving technique, but this technique is not very common among the Mijikenda.

#### Types of Baskets

There are several types of baskets, each with its own name. The most commonly used baskets are the mukoba (pl. mikoba) (Plate: 16), lungo and uteo (Plate: 17). The mukoba is made from plaited mlala and is used by elders and healers to keep their paraphernalia in. The lungo is a round or oval shallow basket for drying maize or other grain, for cleaning sesame (simsim) and for catching ground flour during grinding. The uteo is another type

of shallow (round or oval) basket which is used for winnowing. It is made from certain types of reeds or from the midribs of the leaves of the mukindu palm. The uteo also serves as a women's musical instrument; broken shells or bottle tops are put into it and the basket is shaken to produce the desired sound.

The mudzira (pl. midzira) is a medium sized basket taken to the fields and used to carry small implements and fuel or vegetables collected by the women. The chio (pl. vio) is a small basket which used to be used to serve food in. The gundaya was a small basket made from mlala, in which beans, beads or grains were stored. A number of these baskets containing seeds were often tied round the legs as musical rattles for a dance called gundaya (later the name of the dance changed to gonda). A muruju (pl. miruju) is a round basket with a lid made by male craftsmen for women to keep their ornaments and other personal items in. Other types of baskets are the kiditi, kidungu, kihahana, kirobo and chamanda. These are fairly small baskets made for a variety of purposes.

One type of basket which is rarely made these days is a type made from grass using the twining technique. An example of this type is preserved in the British Museum (B.M. 1953. Af. 24-50. Plate: 17; Figs. 2,3,4). The basket is flask shaped, being broad at the base and tapering to a narrow neck. It is ornamented with leather straps which are attached to the base and border both sides. The straps have a row of cowrie shells sewn on them. In the middle of the basket are two neat rows of closely twisted bands which encircle the basket; at their sides the straps bearing the cowrie shells pass through a loop held in place by cowrie shells and metal strips. At this point the carrying straps no longer bear cowrie shells, they are left plain. The lid is likewise elaborately decorated. It flares out to fit snugly onto the flask and to form part of the overall shape of the flask. It terminates at the tip in a narrow point which is decorated with a tight coil of wire and short cylindrical brass pieces.

Another basket in the British Museum (B.M. 1915. 7-3. 309) is made from plaited strips sewn together. This is a type which is frequently used by the Mijikenda. This particular basket serves to demonstrate that the same plaiting technique is still used by the Mijikenda.

Mats (kitseka. pl vitseka) are made from plaited strips sewn together. Mats are made in different sizes and are rectangular, round or oval in shape. Mats are used for many purposes such as for sleeping, sitting on and for carrying corpses to the grave. Graves are lined with mats and others are used to cover the corpse to that soil does not touch it. When a death occurs the Mijikenda call the first day of the burial kubwaga kitseka ('to throw the mat down, or to lay the mat down') and serves to indicate that a death has occurred. The bereaved sit on mats throughout the funeral feast.

(b) String-making

Strings, cords and ropes of different thickness are made by twisting or plaiting strands of fibre together. Fine string is twisted or spun on the thigh and groups of these are plaited to make a thick rope. Various plant fibres are used to make these strings and cords. The most commonly used fibres for string are derived from creepers or from sansevieria (a kind of wild aloe) and sisal. Both types of plants are locally called mkonge. The long leaf blades are cut and beaten against a log, or across a blunt metal blade embedded in the ground, to loosen the fibres which are stripped off. They are left to dry, but may often be used when wet to make string, since this makes the spinning or twisting much easier. Bast fibres are derived from certain trees and creepers and frequently from the baobab tree (muyu or mbuyu).

Cords and ropes are usually made from the leaves of palms such as milala, mukindu and mwale.

(c) Twining

The twining technique is used in the manufacture of a type of basket called chondo (pl. viondo) and beaded armbands. The fibre used is sansevieria, sisal or baobab. The Mijikenda rarely make twined baskets. The technique involves the twisting of two weft threads round a warp. In making the basket a large number of strings are attached together at the centre of the base so that they radiate outwards. The strings are then twined in pairs round an adjacent string, and as the twining proceeds, the pair of strings

are dropped and a string that has just been used as a warp becomes a weft with another. The twining proceeds in this manner until the required shape and size is reached.

Beaded armbands (kivorodede, pl. vorodede) are constructed using a warp composed of single threads running the length of the bracelet, and a weft composed of beads threaded through a pair of strings. To start with, a row of beads is threaded onto a string about a foot long. The beads are pushed to the middle of the string and then the two ends of the same string are brought together so that they can be crisscrossed in a series of actions to eventually produce a set of strings running through the beads. This can be demonstrated using a set of diagrams (Figs. 7,8). In Step 1 a row of beads is threaded onto a string. In Step 2 the ends of the string are brought together. End A is untwisted slightly to create an opening at point X through which end B passes. Ends A and B are held horizontally together so that they form three lengths of string with the main section of string B.

In Step 3 and 4 the beads are pushed past point X so that they enter end A and B and the main section of string B. End B is then carefully pulled out at Point X leaving two lengths of string in the beads (Step 5).

In Step 6 the beads are straightened ready to receive the warp threads. In Step 7 the warp threads are entered through the space of the two lengths of strings between each bead, leaving two unseparated pairs of beads at each border. When all the warp threads have been entered they are straightened and the beads are pushed together by gently stretching ends A and B. This action centralises the beads. The process continues in the same manner until the required length is achieved. Patterns are created by the use of coloured beads interposed with white (Plates: 28 to 35).

#### (v) Calabashes

Calabashes are grown and used a great deal by the Mijikenda. They are versatile and need little work on them to turn them into objects that can serve many purposes. They come in all shapes and sizes; some are long and thin; some are naturally constricted; some are enormous and round. They are used as containers for flour, oil,

water, palm wine, medicine and are also used as drinking vessels.

When calabashes have matured and have properly dried, the seeds and fibrous inner parts are carefully removed using a wooden scraper or other similar tool that will not damage the shell. Some calabashes are decorated using burned incisions, or carved, but these days it is rare to find these decorated types. According to the Krapf/Rebmann dictionary, a calabash called ndere used to be nicely carved, and that great pains were taken in decorating it. This calabash was of a particular size and was used for palm wine (1887: 300). The term used to refer to decorating a calabash is kudzora which means to engrave, or to carve. The term is also used when talking of carving patterns on wood.

Calabashes generally have names for the different purposes they serve. Kirenge is the general name for calabash. Kiburu, kidundu, and kidonga are fairly small calabashes used for storing liquids and other substances. The kidonga is frequently used as a snuff container, or as a container for medicine, and when it is used in this connection it is usually referred to as kidonga cha muganga ('a doctor's kidonga'). A kitete is a calabash with a long neck used for carrying water or palm wine. When a man goes to make marriage negotiations for the first time, he is obligated to carry with him one kitete of palm wine to open the discussions. A kipuru is used for carrying water or for milking. A kidhuki is used for churning butter, and a kundza for fermented grain. These calabashes are often long and thin in shape and vary in size.

A kadzama is a calabash of a particular size. It is used for carrying and storing palm wine. It usually holds an amount equivalent to about eight to twelve whisky bottles (approx. 20-25 quarts) of palm wine. Among the Mijikenda reference to a kadzama is a figurative way of asking for a small token to open a discussion before a job is undertaken. In marriage and rituals the amount of palm wine required as bridewealth or an initiation fee is always talked of in terms of so many kadzama. Asking for a kadzama of palm wine outside of ritual, ceremony or marriage, does not mean that a person is required to give a fixed amount of palm wine; the amount is agreed upon between the parties. However, it is a specific amount when it has to do with marriage, ritual or other ceremony and it is talked of as kadzama. Thus when someone asks

for a kadzama to undertake a job he or she is referring to a specific amount of palm wine.

A mboko is a narrow calabash which is cut at the broadest section to make a mouth and the other end tapers naturally to a point. The vessel is used for drinking palm wine. Men decorate their drinking calabashes by burning patterns into the shell. The palm wine is sipped through a reed called mrija which has a tightly woven filter at one end. This serves to filter the palm wine which may have bits of palm fibre or insects in it. According to Mijikenda informants, to be offered a mboko of someone's palm wine is to be welcomed into a group of people, and to accept to drink from that mboko or from a number of people's (as is usually the case) is to be willing to be a part of that group.

Much smaller calabashes are used as snuff containers (Fig. 6).

Calabashes are usually prepared by women, but both men and women may decorate them. There appears to be no strict division of labour in the preparation of them. Glass bottles and plastic containers have replaced calabashes in many Mijikenda homes to such an extent, that it is rare to find them in some communities.

#### (vi) Ceramics

##### (a) Earthenware Pots

The making of pots in Mijikenda communities is undertaken by women. Men never make pots. In the pre-colonial times not all Mijikenda communities made pots. The majority of pots were made by the Jibana, Ribe and Jomvu Swahili who had the advantage of living close to major clay deposits. Later, as people migrated to different localities, other groups also began making pots; today, wherever there is clay women make pots.

Pots are made using the coiling or moulding techniques. In the coiling technique, long coils (sometimes called rings) are formed and then attached to a base formed by pressing clay round the base of an old pot or a calabash cut for the purpose. Subsequent coils are smoothed onto the previous ones and the shape is gradually built up until the required size is achieved. The moulding technique involves the shaping of a pot from a lump of clay which is pulled up with the hands in such a way as to create the

particular shape required. The lump of clay is placed in the base of a broken pot, or a calabash cut to the required size. Skill lies in maintaining the shape during the shaping and 'drawing up' process, so that it does not collapse; this means that the potter draws up the clay from the base upwards, making sure that the body of the pot is uniform in thickness.

As the pots are completed they are left in a cool place to dry to the correct consistency for decorating. Simple hatching and cross-hatching patterns are used. Before this is done, the interior and exterior surfaces of the pots are smoothed using a conus shell or piece of calabash. The pots are finally bonfired in a shallow pit. The branches of various trees, and often palm trees, are used for the firing. Once the bonfiring has taken place the pots are allowed to cool and then removed. The final process is a boiling one called kuzulula which strengthens the pots. Certain leaves are mixed with water and put into the pot and boiled. If cracks appear in the pots, a creeper called muengere is pounded to produce a glutinous substance which is applied on the pots to seal the cracks.

The generic name for pots is nyungu (both singular and plural). Biga (Plates: 10,13) is a large waterpot which is usually kept in the main house of the compound. It holds drinking water. Vikalango (sing. kikalango) are used for cooking vegetables. These types of pots come in different sizes and are usually round in shape. Vibungu (sing. kibungu) are bowl-shaped and are used for serving relish. These types of pots usually have a rim at the base. Many earthenware pots are being increasingly replaced by aluminium cooking utensils, and plastic containers are replacing waterpots. Some homes now have cement water storage tanks made in the shape of traditional pots (Plate: 19).

#### (b) Clay Sculptures

The only clay sculptures made and used by the Mijikenda are those used in spirit possession. The sculptures are never fired because they are meant to be broken during the ritual. The technique involved in the making of these sculptures is additive in which lumps of clay are used successively to build up the desired form. Each figure, such as the jangamizi, is made from clay and

banana stalks. The main body of the sculpture is made from a stout banana stalk covered with clay; arms and other projections likewise are made from banana stalks covered with clay and smoothed onto the main body. Parts like ears and the nose are shaped from lumps of clay and smoothed onto the relevant sections. Once the sculptures are complete and have dried, they are decorated with spots of red (ochre) and spots of black (soot). These clay figures are discussed in more detail in the section on healing.

(vii) Musical Instruments

The Mijikenda utilise a range of musical instruments which are made by Mijikenda specialists.

Simple instruments such as the simple flute (kivoti) and rattles like the kayamba can be made by anyone. Complicated instruments such as drums, the nzumari (type of shawm), and metal rattles are made by specialists. There are several types of instruments which can be categorised as follows:

(a) Idiophones

Instruments in this category are of the concussion and percussion type.

(i) The simplest of them is the daba. This is simply an old piece of scrap tin, or a four-gallon tin knocked in at the sides, beaten with two sticks. A gong (upatu) is also used (Plate: 53).

(ii) The kayamba is a rattle consisting of two layers of reeds together and secured to form a shallow compartment in which hard seeds are contained. Sometimes a strip of palm leaf is fastened at the back and is plucked to produce a second sound (Plate: 56).

(iii) The ndonga is made from a calabash with seeds inside or from an old insecticide tin with seeds or pebbles inside and with a wooden handle wedged in at the mouth (Plates: 55,72).

(iv) Njuga are oval-shaped iron rattles made by ironsmiths. The rattles contain small round metal balls. They can also be made from palm nuts and other plant pods (Plate: 62).

(v) The msharara is made from bamboo which is pierced at the sides. Within it are placed long thorns and seeds. The rattle is tilted



or shaken to produce a soft sound. These instruments are rarely used nowadays.

(vi) The uteo is a winnowing basket containing broken shells or bits of bottle glass or bottle tops. It is shaken to produce a tinkling sound.

(vii) The rimba is a xylophone made with a wooden box with a row of wooden parallel bars graduated in length each with their own tone. Sometimes the bars are of the same size but of different types of wood with their own particular quality of tone. Two rubber-covered sticks are used to play the rimba (Plate: 54). (The rubber is from old tyre tubes.)

(b) Membranophones

The instruments in this category are of the percussion and friction types. Drums are made from good wood such as the murihi and mulungu which produce good sound. Mijikenda drummers say it is the sauti (voice) which is the most important quality in a drum. A drum-maker must therefore be able to produce a drum that has a good quality of voice.

(i) The mshondo is a single-membrane cylindrical drum about three to four feet in length and ten to eighteen inches in diameter (Plate: 52). It is usually made from mulungu wood. The whole cylindrical body is completely hollowed out and then closed at one end with a membrane, usually made from wild pigskin. The uncovered end rests on the ground during a performance.

(ii) The bumbumbu is a single-membrane drum which stands on three legs. It is about three feet in height and about ten to twenty inches in diameter. It is generally made out of murihi wood (Plates: 49,50,51).

(iii) The chapuo is a small double-membraned cylindrical drum, measuring about fifteen to eighteen inches long and about eight to ten inches in diameter. It is made out of mbambakofi wood (Plate: 50). The kaamuri is the same shape, but smaller than chapuo. The yumi is double-membraned, cylindrical in shape, and about two to three feet long and about fifteen inches in diameter.

(iv) The mwandza is a friction drum which stands about five to six feet. It is a hollowed cylinder covered with hairy wild pigskin. In the centre of the skin is pierced a hole through which a plaited

palm leaf cord is inserted. The end of the cord is tied to a smooth stick about two feet long and half an inch in diameter. The drum is played by pulling on the stick with wet hands so that as the stick slides in and out the sound produced is a loud one which is said to resemble the roar of a lion or the cry of a hyena. The cord must be held taut in order to produce the deep roaring sound.

(c) Aerophones

There are several types of wind instrument used by the Mijikenda. Some of them are simple in construction, and some are more complicated.

(i) The kivoti is a fairly small flute, usually with four holes, made from reed. The holes are burned into the wood with a red hot iron awl. According to Graham Hyslop (1975: 40), the kivoti is a transverse flute, held horizontally, measuring about 10½ inches long and with six holes. This is the only type of transverse flute found in Kenya, according to Hyslop.

(ii) A mwarutu is a small ocarina made from the fruit of a tree called mkwakwa. It is like a small gourd and has three holes, one larger one in the middle as the mouthpiece and two smaller ones closed with the fingers.

(iii) The kifudu is an earthenware pot used by women for certain dances. It is blown to produce a deep sound.

(iv) Gunda, mbiu and kidzo were horns commonly used in the past, but are rarely seen these days. Buffalo horn or other wildlife horn were used. Holes were cut into the horns with a knife.

(v) The nzumari is a type of shawm. According to Hyslop (1975: 43) the nuzumari is the most sophisticated wind instrument in Kenya. It has a double reed which vibrates in the mouth. The reed is made from a section of a reed called mvumo. There is a shallow lip shield made from a section of a fine coconut shell. This is followed by 2 inches long fine brass tubing which is fixed into the next section, made of bamboo, with a plug of cassava. It is in this 6 inches of bamboo that six holes are cut to produce different notes. The bamboo is fastened in its turn to a bell-shaped carved wooden end by a plaited ring of string. The bell-shaped section is decorated with incised patterning, very similar to other triangular patterns used by the Mijikenda in other objects.

(viii) Ironsmithing

The manufacture of metal artifacts requires a group of at least two smiths to work together in the various aspects of the process of production using smithing techniques. A smithing group interviewed in Shariani is composed of three men in their 60s, each of whom is responsible for a particular part of the production. Tete wa Koi works the furnace, or forge, making sure to maintain the correct temperature at all times. Mwambere wa Mbita and Charo was Kabao work rhythmically together, hammering and shaping the artifacts. This part of the work has to be well-coordinated as the metal has to be fed into the furnace, drawn out, hammered and shaped without allowing it to cool too rapidly. The smiths normally work every Monday, Wednesday and Friday provided they have enough charcoal for the furnace. On the other days they are busy making charcoal, and sometimes they have to go in search of scrap metal from scrap metal dealers. This particular group manufactures knives, hoes and other implements. According to them their trade is slowly being undermined by factory-produced wares and they say that they do not receive as many orders as in the past when the factory-manufactured items were not so readily available. However, people do still come to order hoes, since the Mijikenda still prefer their particular type, and people also come with things which need repairing.

Other metalworkers specialise in the production of metal ornaments, such as bracelets, anklets, chains, beads and necklets made from aluminium, iron, brass and copper. The metals are used alone or sometimes in combination with each other. Some metalworkers specialise in just one particular item, such as earplugs for example, and become well-known for this. Sometimes a metal chainmaker will limit himself to making chains and nothing else; another may specialise in making clasps. This often means that customers buy a set of chains from the chainmaker and go to a clasp maker to get clasps. The clasp maker, or another metalworker, fixes the clasps onto the chains. There are some specialists who are capable of producing a variety of ornaments.

Most objects are made by heating up the metal until it is red-hot, after which it is hammered and shaped to the required form.

If aluminium is used, it is sometimes melted and wooden moulds are used. The metal ornaments are decorated by punching, incising and inlaying.

The workshop (chanda) is a very simple structure standing about four feet high, made of poles simply stationed in the ground and held together with a central pole and as a roof structure made of palm leaves. Within the workshop are the following tools:

- (1) the bellows (mifuo) made from goatskin and attached to two sticks at one end and a clay pipe at the other;
- (2) the anvil (fulawe) which is used for the hammering process;
- (3) the forge (mulomo);
- (4) a heavy hammer (nyundo) used for the hammering process;
- (5) tongs/pincers (koleo/peleo) used for gripping the metal;
- (6) an adze (tezo);
- (7) trough of water.

The precise methods of metalworking among the Mijikenda cannot be discussed in detail because it was not possible to interview craftsmen involved in this activity; many of them have stopped producing ornaments because people are no longer interested in wearing them. It is hoped, however, that further field research will be undertaken in the future specifically to deal with this particular subject.

Many of the implements used by the Mijikenda are made by ironsmiths. Unlike metalworkers producing ornaments, ironsmiths producing tools continue to receive orders from Mijikenda people.

#### (a) Metal Tools

Metal tools made by ironsmiths include knives, axes, adzes, hatchets, gouges, tweezers and hoes (Plates: 20,21; Fig. 5). Mijikenda knives (visu) are found in a variety of sizes but have the same basic shape, being straight-edged at the blunt side and with a slightly curved sharp blade, the curve being more pronounced towards the tip. The handles are made from very light wood such as the mukirindi and the mukwembe. These knives are preferred to shop-bought ones because they are cheaper to order from the smiths to

one's specifications, and because the blade can always be taken back to the ironsmiths to be reshaped to a fine-razor-sharp edge. When big knives begin to get 'eaten away' by constant sharpening, they are taken to the smiths who make smaller knives from the remaining blades. These very sharp knives are used for cutting meat and vegetables; preparing palm leaves for plaiting; for harvesting crops; for tapping palm wine, and so forth. Knives are also used a great deal in carving and shaping wooden objects, and in decorating aluminium ornaments.

Mijikenda hoes (jembe, pl. majembe) have very short handles and the hoe blades are almost fan-shaped and slightly concave at their broadest ends. The wood used for the handles is of long-lasting quality; often by the time the hoe has worn away completely the wooden handle is still very strong and can be used for another blade. The hoe can normally be used for many years, and as the blade begins to wear away, it is reshaped so that eventually it becomes very small and looks almost like a miniature hoe. Such a hoe can be used to weed rock areas. The Mijikenda hoes seem ideally suited to the type of coral and sandy terrain of many Mijikenda localities. The Mijikenda have always practised swidden agriculture; after the burning has taken place, the ground is much easier to work, so that the hoes do no more than turn the soil over.

In the past, sharp machetes called miundu (sing. mundu) used to be used to clear bush. These were eventually replaced by shop-bought ones called panga (a type of machete). According to Mundu Muzuka miundu used to clear bush so well that it was often difficult to believe that such an implement could have done the job (an iron sword which closely resembles the mundu is preserved in the British Museum and dates from about 1915. This type of sword used to be used by young men chiefly as an ornament. It is double-edged with a pointed tip, a wooden handle and hilt bound neatly with leather (Plate: 27; B.M. 1915. 7-3. 46). In the same collection is an iron-bladed axe (B.M. 1915. 7-3. 48).

Factory-produced implements probably made their first appearance in Mijikenda communities in the early 1900s. In 1914 Arthur Champion, Assistant District Commissioner in Giriama District, issued fifteen hoes, four spades, two picks, two crowbars, to a 'headman', Fondo wa Nyama, as an inducement of some sort.

These implements were manufactured in Britain (KNA. DC/DF1/3/2. 1914). These may have been the first British manufactured tools used by the Mijikenda.

(b) Stone Tools

Apart from the wooden mortar, sometimes the Mijikenda use a cylindrical stone mortar for pounding spices. Such mortars are hollowed out by chipping with a chisel and hammer. Another stone implement used frequently by the Mijikenda is the lwalwa, a grinding-stone. The traditional type is composed of a bottom stone and an upper stone and is used for grinding grain that has already been pounded in a mortar (Plate: 22). The upper millstone is called sago and the lower one is called lwalwa la kusagira ('millstone for grinding'). These days, the most commonly used millstone is a rotary quern (Plates: 23-26) which is made from coral stone cut from a sandstone layer below the sand beach at low tide. The blocks are cut out using a European axe and then they are shaped with a chisel and hammer. The implement consists of an upper and a lower stone, both circular in shape. The upper one has a hole through the middle and the lower one has a stick in its middle which goes through the hole in the upper stone. The upper stone also has a vertical stick at one end and one across the width of the hole. The vertical stick is held to rotate the upper stone, and the horizontal stick gives momentum to the rotating upper stone. The pounded grain is poured through the hole and the ground flour falls into a basket on which the quern is placed. This type of grinding-stone is also called lwalwa.

(ix) Personal Arts: Dress and Ornaments

Many changes have occurred in the personal arts of the Mijikenda. Changes in the use of art forms are more evident among the younger generation which has been exposed to some or full formal western-type education. Members of this group usually find employment in the towns and stay there, only returning to the rural areas to visit and to bring money and gifts for family members. This group has adopted the western-type of dress and has discarded the traditional mode (as in other parts of the world where fashion

constantly changes, the same phenomenon exists among the Mijikenda). Other Mijikenda people who often adopt a new style of life and personal art forms are Mijikenda Muslims and Christians. The type of garments worn are, more or less, the western-type, but sometimes people may wear garments common to the coast: for men this is the kikoi, a waistcloth which is usually worn at home (while trousers and shirts are worn outside the home). Women wear either western-type clothes or the Swahili leso, printed cotton cloths wrapped around the body (Plates: 46,47,48). However, since clothing is a matter of personal choice and depends on an individual's circumstances, the discussion here can only be a generalised one.

(a) Dress

A traditional mode of dress is more likely to be found in the rural communities, and more so in the more remote villages. In the case of women, traditional attire is more evident than among men who, apart from some elders, wear the kikoi with or without a vest or shirt (Plate: 46). Formerly, there were traditional conventions regarding dress which enabled the categorisation of the wearer in marking out differences between for example, men and women, between living and dead women, between married and unmarried women, and so forth. It was not so much a set of precise rules governing the use of every conceivable artifact, as common knowledge of the range of options permissible in given circumstances.

All women entering marriage wore white skirts called mahando (sing. hando), and all females, irrespective of whether or not they were married, adult or child, wore a hando at death. All married women wore, in addition to the hando, a blue skirt called musimbiji (pl. misimbiji) made in the same style as the hando (Plate: 45). Unmarried and married women could wear a skirt called bandika made of torn up strips of old cloth and looped over a waist-string (Plate: 44). The hando and musimbiji, unlike the bandika, are pleated across the full length and then thoroughly pounded in a mortar with water to fix the pleats and to make the cloth soft and crinkly. The pleated lengths are then gathered onto waist-strings to make the skirts. These skirts are worn with beaded waistbands. The longer the cloth used, the more voluminous the skirt. For marriage, the bride's mother and grandmothers make the hando and

musimbiji. These are used in conjunction with a black cloth called kitambi and a blue cloth called kaniki (these accompany the hando) and the kiburaa (red) is used with the musimbiji. A piece of white cloth is used by the bride to wipe excess castor-oil off her body during the blessing ceremony; this cloth will later be put on the marriage bed so that the virginity of the girl can be ascertained. The grandmothers will collect the cloth from the bed. According to some informants, the blue skirt (or the blue cloth called kaniki) was used to indicate to the husband that his wife was menstruating.

Women continue to wear these types of skirts. Married women wear the hando, the musimbiji, and the bandika. Unmarried women wear the bandika and young women usually prefer to wear western-type clothes, in many cases. Most of the women who wear these traditional skirts cover them with leso which has the effect of making the women look grossly overweight. Little girls wear tiny bandika skirts, or leso tied in a crisscross fashion at the neck so that it drapes to the knees. The leso has become very popular because it can serve a variety of uses; it is used to carry babies on the back; as clothing; as a cover when resting or sleeping; as a headtie, etc.

As far as ornament is concerned, women wear a variety of them. It is rare to see men wearing ornaments, except for simple copper, brass or iron bangles which are sometimes prescribed by traditional doctors for certain illness. Ornaments worn by the Mijikenda are made by male specialist craftsmen, but these artifacts are now obsolescent. It appears that women have always utilised a great range of ornaments than men. This pattern of behaviour has not radically changed at the present time. Although few people wear the traditional styles of ornament these days, many women continue to feel a need to wear some form of ornament; they buy plastic bangles and bracelets from shops; and it is quite common to see women wearing rubber sealing rings (for oil caps, etc., on cars) as bangles. Beaded bracelets are also obsolescent.

Attractive ornaments used to be worn for ceremonial feasts and dances. Certain types were reserved for old women, and certain types were used solely by a bride. A married woman attending a dance or ceremony was likely to be dressed in any of the three skirts i.e. the bandika, the musimbiji or the hando, according to



her preference. Round her neck she would have worn a metal necklace called mukufu (pl. mikufu) (Plate: 40) or a beaded one called kipote-pote (Plate: 37) or any other type of necklace; round her arms would have been worn copper or brass wire coils, called matsango and finally on her arms and wrists she would have worn beaded bands called vorodede (sing. kivorodede) (Plates: 33-35). Unmarried women would have worn the bandika, and the same type of ornaments. Though present day Mijikenda women continue to wear the bandika, musimbiji and hando, it is extremely rare to find them wearing the above ornaments. At one time it seems vorodede were very popular. According to one informant, Kache wa Mweri, women used to compete to make themselves the most attractive vorodede, and that sometimes a woman might be seen wearing a really outstanding piece of bead ornament and women would turn to each other and ask 'sisters, whose daughter is that', in admiration. She remarked that 'these days, there is no more beauty (urembo) left in our communities'.

The different types of ornaments which used to be made by the Mijikenda for festive occasions are briefly described below. Some have been discontinued, but others are still used.

(b) Bead Ornaments

Beaded ornaments are made by women. There are many types, but the commonest are the following, worn as ornament at ritual, ceremonial and other festive occasions.

(i) Lelemama is a beaded apron with a fringe of coins, worn by women and girls.

(ii) A kipote-pote (Plate: 37) is a bead collar fringed with coins, worn by women.

(iii) Kisara-sara (Plate: 36) is an openwork beaded necklace worn by all women and young girls. Women were usually buried in these types of necklaces.

(iv) A tunda is a necklace made of strands of beads spaced with leather or plastic strips and fastened with aluminium clasps with incised decorations. A tunda is also a type of belt. The aluminium clasps are made by male craftsmen. These are still commonly used.

(v) A tungu is a type of necklace made of strands of beads spaced with plastic or leather strips. It is sometimes fastened with

aluminium clasps. These types of necklaces are still used by Mijikenda women.

(vi) Vorodede (Plates: 28-35) are arm and wrist bands made using the twining technique. A band measuring 9 inches by 1¾ inches, can contain as many as 2,500 beads (I counted the number of beads in several bands preserved in the Kenya National Museum).

(c) Metal Ornaments

All metal ornaments are made by specialist craftsmen. Some of these craftsmen just specialise in one type of ornament, but some specialise in a variety of them.

(i) Vidanga (sing. kidanga) (Plate: 41; Fig. 16) are frequently made of heavy iron and are often decorated with grooved marks. They are hinged by means of wooden pegs passed through holes bored in the metal. Vidanga are also made of aluminium and these types are sometimes decorated with inlaid copper. Occasionally vidanga are made of brass and copper. Octagonal waist rings made of aluminium are also called vidanga; these are often decorated with incised patterns.

(ii) Vifufu (sing. kifufu) (Plates: 39,40; Figs. 9,10,11,12) are made by melting down old aluminium cooking pots and then worked with a knife and file. Sometimes wooden moulds are used. There are several types of cylindrical, conical and 'mushroom' shapes, some of which have long stems projecting from the centre. These ear-plugs are discussed more fully in Chapter twelve on style.

(iii) Mikufu (sing. Mukufu) (Plate: 40) are either worn round the ankles or the neck. They are made of several lengths of chain fastened with aluminium clasps. They are usually made from iron or aluminium. The clasps (kibamba, pl. vibamba) (Plate: 40; Fig. 48) are usually decorated with incised patterns.

(iv) Mikorongo (sing. mukorongo) (Fig. 17) are anklets which are often composed of two sections hinged together with ebony pins. They are made of iron or brass. Some are decorated with deep grooved spiral lines, in which the twist is carved into the metal with a file. Sometimes they are patterned with incised criss-cross patterns. Mikorongo can be used purely for ornament, or may sometimes be specially treated by traditional doctors (waganga) and worn as protection against an evil spirit called mutumwa, which

could tie the leg of a person and drag her or him away to be sold as a slave.

(v) Mithirima (sing. muthirima) are made by melting down old aluminium cooking pots and then the metal is hammered and shaped into the required form. They are usually faceted and inlaid with ebony wood. These ornaments were worn by old men and women on their lower arms.

(vi) Mweri (Plate: 39; Figs. 14,15,49) are round aluminium discs decorated with incised patterns, and sometimes inlaid with copper and ebony. The original type of mweri was made out of cut conus shell. The mweri were worn dangling from the hair at the back of the head, or dangling from a necklace, or attached to a skirt at the back. Teething children sometimes wear mweri as a sign of their growth. These ornaments are discussed in greater detail in the chapter on style.

(vii) Ngandu (Figs. 18,19) are various types of brass and copper bracelets. These ornaments are frequently decorated with incised patterns, and sometimes with punched and hammered marks.

(viii) Ndale are strings of tiny brass and copper rings, or beads, worn by women round the ankles. Some ndale are used as necklaces. The beads are cylindrical types. Some fine ndale rings are made into necklaces (Fig. 20). Brides usually wear ndale.

(ix) Ndore (Plate: 38) are heavy brass cylindrical beads which are strung on sisal and worn as necklaces. Ndore were originally used for decorating the hair of brides. These beads were threaded through twisted strands of hair until the whole head was a mass of beads. Some families had these beads sewn onto cotton caps and these were worn by the brides who could remove them at night.

(x) Nsango (madzango/mafsango) are brass or copper or aluminium coils worn round the arms.

(xi) Ivory Bracelets (Plates: 42,43) were often made in three or four sections hinged with ebony pins. Bracelets for luvoo elders were made out of buffalo horn. Both types of materials were first buried in the ground for a period of time to soften them, after which they were cut and shaped, and finally polished smooth. The luvoo bracelets were made by ritual experts (or craftsmen commissioned by them). The ornamental ivory (elephant/rhino) bracelets were made by craftsmen skilled in that type of work. These bracelets were

most probably worn by waganga. They have sometimes been wrongly described as the ritual luvoo bracelets, but elders said that they were used purely as ornament.

FOOTNOTES

1. J. Krapf/J. Rebmann, A Nika-English Dictionary, 1887, p.292.
2. Op.Cit., p.11.
3. R. Coupland, East Africa and its Invaders, 1938, p.379.
4. C.T. Brady, Commerce and Conquest in East Africa: With Particular Reference to the Salem Trade with Zanzibar, 1950, p.118.
5. C.H. Stigand, The Land of Zinj, 1913, p.122.
6. British Parliamentary Papers: Reports and Correspondence on British Protectorates in East and Central Africa, 1890-99, p.415.
7. Coupland, Op.Cit., p.36.
8. Ibid.
9. J. de Vere Allen, 'Swahili Culture Reconsidered: Some Historical Implications of the Material Culture of the Northern Kenya Coast in the 18th and 19th Centuries', Azania, IX, 1974, p.112.
10. J. Kirkman, Men and Monuments of the East African Coast, 1964, pp.36-37.
11. Op.Cit., p.37.
12. C.W. Hobley, Kenya: From Chartered to Crown Colony, 1929; N. Chittick, 'Early Beads in East Africa', Kenya Past and Present, 6, 1975; R. Gray and D. Birmingham (eds), Pre-Colonial African Trade, 1970.
13. G. Freeman-Grenville, The East African Coast, 1962; Kirkman, Op.Cit., pp.36-37; C.S. Nicholls, The Swahili Coast, 1971, p.210.
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PART THREE

THE INSTITUTION OF PATRONAGE IN THE ARTS

Chapter Seven: Marriage Ceremonies

The significance of marriage as marking the beginning of a new domestic unit within the lineage, and as establishing an important bond between two lineages hardly needs further comment here. The bridewealth system is, of course, a crucial factor in these relationships. In present day Mijikenda communities, the traditional type of marriage ceremonies have been superceded, more or less, by Christian and Islamic types. The bridewealth system, however, continues to be as important, and payment has become, in the majority of cases, prohibitively high. Payment continues to be in the form of livestock and cash, or both, or just cash; this depends on the arrangement two families reach.

In the more traditional practice, the procedure leading up to marriage can be fairly drawn out. In the past, all marriage negotiations including proposals, were undertaken by the man's father, but the Mijikenda say that these days a man can propose to a girl and then inform his father who will tell him whether or not bridewealth is available. Though some of the customs have changed, the basic procedures remain more or less the same. A man first goes and proposes to a woman he loves, after which his father goes to discuss the amount of bridewealth. In the past, a suitor about to go to propose to a girl, wore a white cloth knotted at the shoulders and wore metal ornaments. His hair was finely twisted, but he wore no ornaments in it. He carried a walking stick, which is said to have been an attractive one. Dressed in this manner people knew that he was going to propose to a girl; this stage was referred to as aroni (proposal). He took a witness with him and as soon as the girl's brothers saw them coming they came to meet them and took them to a private room. The girl and her witness were brought there. The two witnesses talked on behalf of the suitor and the girl. On the first and second meetings the girl refused

the proposal; this was so that she did not appear overly eager to accept the suitor. On the third day she accepted by telling her suitor to go and say goodbye to her father. The suitor's witness then informed the girl's father that they themselves would not be coming back, but that the suitor's father would come instead. The proper discussions began when the suitor's father went to talk to the girl's father. The procedures today are more or less the same.

The suitor's father takes with him one kitete (a calabash of a specific size) of palm wine which is referred to as uchi la kuomba ('for asking' i.e. to open the discussions). When he arrives, the palm wine is put into an earthenware pot placed at the door of the house. The girl's father then calls his wife and instructs her to call her daughter. The daughter is called to come and kneel in front of the pot. She is instructed by her mother to take a drinking calabash (mboko), kept inside a wooden dish (muwure) and to scoop out some wine and taste it. Having tasted it, her mother asks her whose palm wine it is. The girl keeps quiet. The mother repeats the question three times, finally saying 'I'm asking you, don't make me look like a fool', and the girl immediately names her suitor. She then hands the mboko of wine to her father who in turn asks her whether he should drink it, and she tells him to drink it; this signifies her acceptance of the proposal. The suitor's father is given a date when he will be required to bring another calabash of palm wine to start the proper negotiations. He is required to take one kadzama (a calabash holding about 8 to 12 whisky bottles) of palm wine, referred to as kufunga murango ('to close the door'), which means the girl's father will not accept any other proposals for his daughter. After this, the suitor's father is required to take another kadzama of wine, referred to as tembo la nyumbani ('palm wine for the household'); this particular wine is drunk inside the house by the immediate family. After this, the girl's family goes into a private meeting to decide on the exact amount of bridewealth. The suitor's father is subsequently informed to come back at another time with one or more kadzama in order to be told the exact amount. This palm wine is referred to as tembo la mlango ('palm wine for the door', i.e. extended family); the wine is drunk by the extended family.

When the bridewealth has been paid, in full or in part

according to the agreement between the two families, the suitor's father takes another calabash of palm wine and goes to 'beg' (kuomba) for his 'daughter', saying that he has come to fetch his 'daughter', so that she can go and cook muchunga (a wild bitter spinach) for him. The girl's family goes into a private meeting to fix the date and subsequently informs the suitor's father accordingly.

In the past, bridewealth payment consisted of eight heifers and one bull and fifteen calabashes of palm wine. It was obligatory to have the bull as it had to serve the cows. According to several elders in their 80s, when they got married the bride-wealth payment was eight heifers, one bull and fifteen calabashes of palm wine, and they said that at that time eight heifers were equivalent to eighty goats which some people used instead of cows. On the day the animals were brought to the girl's home, the suitor's father is asked to bring a goat to placate the mikoma (memorial posts and sculptures for ancestors). The palm wine portion of the bridewealth can be brought in instalments if the suitor's family is unable to supply it all at one go.

As in the past, the palm wine portion of the bridewealth continues to play a very important part in the marriage. It ensures the husband genetricial rights, which means that all children born of the marriage are legally his (cf. Parkin 1982, 64). Should the wife default by running away, or by causing problems to her husband such that he sends her away, this portion of the bridewealth cannot be returned. The other portion of the bridewealth, i.e. the livestock or cash, or both, ensures the husband uxorial rights over his wife (cf. Parkin 1972, 64). The Mijikenda explained that this part of the bridewealth 'buys' the wife and legitimises the sexual relationship. Should the woman run away her father or brothers will be obliged to repay this portion. However, if he sends her away for no obvious reason, her family can refuse to pay it back. Should the woman remarry, her new husband is required to repay this uxorial portion to the former husband.

Once the girl's family receives the bridewealth, part of it is used to purchase fabric and ornaments for her wedding day, and other items she will take to her new home. White cotton cloth is bought in enough quantity to provide a very full pleated and gathered skirt,



and to leave a large enough piece to go round her shoulders. Blue, red and black cotton cloths are also bought for the wedding ceremony. From metalmakers are ordered an assortment of metal beads and chains.

As the wedding day approaches the girl is groomed by her mother and grandmothers. Her body is massaged and oiled and her eyebrows plucked. Her hair is finely twisted and small cylindrical brass beads called ndore are threaded through each twisted strand of hair, row after row until the whole head is a mass of dangling beads, which resembles a finely beaded cap. According to informants, the mass of beads is so heavy that to turn the head is difficult (some informants said that years back, some families used to order finely made cotton caps, such as those worn by the Muslims, and the metal beads would be sewn onto it. The bride's hair would be completely shaved off and she would wear the cap during the day and remove it at night). On the day the bride leaves her home for her future husband's, she is adorned (kupamba) with the different ornaments. Her mother coils copper or aluminium wire round her lower arms, from wrist to elbow. Above the elbows she wears beaded bands (vorodede) and around her neck is coiled a continuous string of spherical brass or copper beads called ndale, and a necklace made of fine metal chain, called mukufu (pl. mikufu), usually fringed with coins (Plate: 40). In her earlobes she wears metal earplugs called vifufu (Plates: 39,40; Figs. 9,10.11,12). Around her ankles she wears fine metal chain, also called mukufu. She is finally dressed in her white hando, and the kitambi (black) is wrapped round the upper section of her body, and the kiburaa (red) over her shoulders. The musimbiji (blue) is put into a basket with the white cloth and will be carried by one of the grandmothers accompanying the bride to her new home. The use of red, white and black cloths deserves some comment. These three colours are used in many African cultures in ritual contexts. For example, one may find that people in the process of transformation from one state to another, that is, from one 'stable' condition to another, are covered in all three. This visual chaos (if that is what it is) seems to be an apt representation of the unclear status of the individual undergoing transformation. At marriage then, the bride is leaving her youth (what may be termed the 'irresponsible' period) behind and entering adult life ('responsible' phase) wherein she

will now begin her role in the society as wife and childbearer (see section on Vigango for further comment on the use of these three colours).

When it is time for the bride to leave, she is brought out of the house and appropriate songs are sung. Her father slaughters a goat in her honour. He makes a bracelet, called kiroko, out of the skin of the goat and attaches it to her daughter's wrist. This is an important artifact which indicates that the wearer has been honoured by someone, in this case her father. The songs that are sung, as she leaves her home, are called kayombo. According to informants, two young children walk in front of the bride, and her two grandmothers and bridesmaid and relatives follow behind. The bride's party is met midway by the groom's party. At this point the two children and the relatives return home and the bride is escorted by her grandmothers and bridesmaid. One grandmother carries a basket containing the bride's personal belongings and the other carries a three-legged stool (kihi).

The arrival of the bride at the groom's house is referred to as kukuta umande (kukuta, 'to shake off'; umande, 'the dew'; literally 'to shake off the dew'). A chicken is killed to welcome the bride. The second day of the ceremony is the rest day, and the wedding ceremony takes place on the third day. The ceremony is attended by relatives and guests of both sides. The bride is dressed as she came and the groom is dressed in a white cotton cloth draped from the shoulders, and he wears a metal chain necklace and metal earrings. The couple sit side by side and are subsequently anointed with castor-oil by the officiating elder who also takes water in his mouth and ejects a spray over both groom and bride in blessing. They are both reminded of their obligations and the bride is reminded of her wifely duties. A goat is then slaughtered and the groom makes a kiroko and attaches it to his wife's other wrist.

The marriage can only be consummated after the groom's father has had sexual intercourse with his wife, and if he has more than one wife, then with all of them. He will inform his son when it is time for him to consummate his marriage; a man cannot consummate his marriage without his father's permission. The bride is expected to be a virgin. Her grandmothers will be given a gift by the

husband is she is a virgin, but should he discover that she is not, he will tell them 'the millet has been eaten by a bird'. If she is a virgin, the grandmothers will collect the white piece of cloth and inform people that the bride has made them proud.

On the fourth day, the bride's grandmothers go out to look for firewood and bring it to the bride's home. When they return they are given water to wash and then the thigh of a goat killed the previous day for the bride is given to them to take home. The grandmothers leave after the bride has demonstrated to her in-laws that she is capable of work by grinding flour and cooking for her new family.

#### Jibana Proposal: Example of Variation

According to Jibana traditions, the young girl is 'stolen' by the man interested in marrying her. The man first proposes privately to the girl and then goes back to her home and 'steals' her and takes her to his father's home. He informs his father that he has found someone to marry. The father asks him whose daughter she is. The father then takes a calabash of palm wine and goes to see the girl's father to inform him that he has seen a 'guest' at his home and that he has come to discuss the pishi (bridewealth), adding 'so that you don't think your cow has strayed, it is at my home'. The girl's father replies, 'you did wrong; it would have been good if you had come first, but now there is no problem, you have come'. They drink the palm wine and discuss the amount of bridewealth. The rest of the procedure is the same as that for the rest of the Mijikenda. Variations of this kind frequently occur among other Mijikenda groups.

Chapter Eight: Mortuary and Obituary Celebrations

Mortuary and obituary ceremonies are probably the most prominent features of Mijikenda culture. They are the outstanding venues for music, songs and dance performances. It is difficult for a Mijikenda to perceive of burial without a feast in which songs and dances, which used to be loved by the deceased, are performed. Families who are unable to hold a funeral or commemoration feast will not rest easy, for they believe that at some point in their lives the deceased will come to trouble them and will afflict them in punishment. Thus, those who are unable to hold these feasts must appease the spirits of their deceased by promising them that a feast will be held as soon as the family is in a better financial position. Funeral and commemoration ceremonies demonstrate visibly those members of the community who are economically strong and those who are not; it is a way in which economic differentiation in a community is clearly brought out (cf. Parkin 1972, 78). It is generally agreed that a funeral without a feast is not a proper funeral. Burial may take place without being followed by a feast; but at some later date, reparation must be made by holding a lavish commemoration feast, and later still, an installation feast during which time memorials are erected for ancestors. If there should be no funeral or commemoration feast, the Mijikenda say that people will immediately wonder if there is something wrong in the family; perhaps this is an indication that the family is too poor to afford a feast; perhaps it implies that there is a family feud. The Mijikenda say that by not holding a feast and calling for the deceased's favourite music, songs and dances to be performed, the spirit of the deceased will come and curse the home. Fears of being thought poor, of the implication that the head of the home, responsible for hosting the feast, did not love the deceased, propel even the poorest relatives to come together and contribute towards the funeral expenses; each member contributing whatever amount he or she is able to. If there is to be a feast, money must be made available to purchase animals if the family does not own some. This often means that the family has to sell something, or mortgage their property to get cash for the expenses (cf. Parkin 1972, 77-79).

(i) Death and Burial

Burial ceremonies are called nyere za mwezi ('hair of the moon'). Funeral ceremonies for Mijikenda children are not lavish. The burial takes place with little fuss. A chicken may be killed, but usually there are no funeral feasts. Some Mijikenda informants said that if a family wants to, it can host a small feast and kill a goat for the purpose, but this practice is not common. A child's body is prepared in the same way that an adult's body is; it is washed in herbal medicine and the hair is shaved. A girl is dressed in the traditional white marriage skirt (hando) and bead ornaments are put on the body; these take the form of beaded bracelets. A boy is dressed in a white waistcloth (shuka), but no ornaments are used. An elder explained that unmarried girls (including very young ones) are dressed in the hando 'because everyone has her wedding day'. If the child was a first-born the body is covered in castor-oil leaves which are called nguo za zamani ('clothes of long ago'). Commemoration ceremonies are never held for children, neither are memorials installed for them. Elders explained that this is because memorials are only installed for married people who have descendants.

The following is a description of funeral and commemoration ceremonies for non-status Mijikenda. Funeral and commemoration ceremonies for ritual elders are discussed in the section on ancestral commemoration.

As soon as death occurs, ritual elders are called by the head of the bereaved family to come and prepare the body for burial. All burial rites are performed by ritual elders (i.e. by those elders with the luvoo bracelet); if the deceased is a woman, the preparation of the body is undertaken by female elders. People are not supposed to wail while the body is being prepared for burial; a ritual elder will give the signal for brief wailing to start when the body has been prepared. Grief is not supposed to be shown because death is not supposed to be the end of a person's life. The reason for wailing is to notify others that a death has occurred.

The body is first washed using herbal medicine and the body and head hair is shaved. The body is then anointed with castor-oil and then dressed in the appropriate burial garments. A deceased man is wrapped in a white cotton cloth if he was a married young

man. An elder has a kitambi (black cloth) wrapped round his body and tied with a white sash at the waist. The body, in both cases of young and elder, is then completely wrapped in a white shroud and further wrapped in a plaited mat. A woman is similarly washed, shaved and anointed with oil and dressed in a white hando. The upper portion of her body is wrapped in black and red cloths (kaniki and kiburaa respectively). Light ornaments are put on the body; at the neck is worn the kisara-sara, an openwork bead necklace; a mukufu, a fine chain necklet and on the arms are worn vorodede, beaded bracelets. Earplugs are not worn. The bodies of deceased men do not have any ornaments.

While the body is being prepared appropriate songs are sung. It is women who sing these particular songs. The songs are said to keep the deceased company, and to assure him or her that everything is alright. For instance, one song says 'don't worry, that noise (i.e. the brief wailing) doesn't come from anywhere near, it comes from Mumba (i.e. a distant place); someone has passed away at Mumba'. Such songs are said to distract the deceased's attention from the fact that he or she has actually died, and he or she will be deceived into believing that he or she is still alive.

When the body is ready for burial it is carried to the grave in a plaited mat. The body is placed in the grave and covered with another mat so that soil does not fall on it. Graves for ordinary adults (i.e. people who are not members of the Luvoo, Vaya and Fisi) are not lined with planks of wood; traditionally only status elders were entitled to the use of planks to line their graves.

However, these days, people who can afford to use coffins do so, though some ritual elders view this as a breach of custom.

The burial day is known as michanga mibichi ('fresh soil') and refers to the digging of the grave and the subsequent burial. Burial normally takes place within twenty-four hours of death. Immediately after the burial, the male members of the bereaved family go into a private meeting to decide whether there will be a funeral feast. Someone who is not a member of the bereaved family is sent to announce whether or not there will be a feast.

The first day of the funeral feast is called kubwaga kitseka ('to throw the mat down'; 'to lay down the mat'). This refers to the laying down of plaited mats on which the members of the bereaved

family sit during the duration of the feast. They sit away from the mainstream of activities and do not participate in any of the songs and dances. During this time the men may plait strips for mats and baskets. Later on, all the unwanted palm leaf strips, which are not thrown away, will be gathered up and burnt to signify the end of the funeral feast.

The second day of the ceremony is referred to as kushindiria majembe ('to press down with the hoes'); this refers to the pressing down of the soil on the grave and the putting away of the hoes. The start of the funeral feast proper is on the second day for a woman and on the third day for a man; this is referred to as kunyoa ('to shave') and marks the beginning of the shaving of the heads of members of the bereaved family to signify that they have started their mourning (kuanza maji, literally 'to start the water'). Shaving of the head takes place on the grave and songs performed on this day are referred to as 'songs to shave the bereaved'. The slaughtering day (kuchinja) is on the third day for a woman and on the fourth for a man. The animals to be consumed at the feast are slaughtered right on top of the grave; if there are ancestral memorials in the compound a sacrificial animal must be slaughtered there and offerings of food, palm wine and water must be made to the ancestors before any feasting takes place.

The Mijikenda say that the reason why a funeral (and commemoration) feast for a woman only lasts four days, while that for a man lasts five days, is because women and men cannot be placed on the same par. They also say that this is a custom that has been practised from time immemorial.

When the animals have been slaughtered women at the funeral feast are given meat to cook and serve to those present. Palm wine is provided by the family, and people also bring some as a way of offering their condolence.

The last day of the feast is called kuchoma ng'ongo ('to burn the palm leaf strips, i.e. ng'ongo'), meaning that the pieces of discarded palm leaf strips used in plaiting are burnt to mark the end of the feast.

Musicians are invited by the bereaved family to perform songs and dances which used to be loved by the deceased. These musicians are not paid any money, but are given food and palm wine. During

the day, women perform what are known as kifudu songs (the word kifudu is the name of an earthenware pot which used to be used by women as an instrument). The women use a winnowing tray (uteo) containing pieces of broken seashell or bottletops, which they shake in accompaniment to the songs. Many may join in and dance to 'make their bodies happy' (kufurahisha mwiri). These dances, however, are seen as women's dances, although it is quite common (these days at least) to find male composers performing with these women's groups; sometimes these men become well-known leaders of the groups. At night, songs and dances which involve a lot of strenuous drumming are performed by the men. The music, songs and dances performed allow people to freely participate. At such feasts it is a common sight to see both young and elderly people showing off their skills. Often the elderly become the centre of attraction as they challenge the younger generation to show what it can do. Women will call out to each other to show how well they dance, a common phrase being 'come on sisters, show your bandika' meaning that the women (usually the younger ones) should reveal their skirts hidden under leso wrappers. This is a challenge to the younger women to come to the centre of the dance group and compete with the older women. Women with babies strapped to their backs find no problem in joining in the dancing, so children experience rhythm from an early age as they bounce on the backs of the women carrying them. The repertoire is familiar to everyone so there is a lot of participation from the audience which joins in the chorus and dances (Plates: 58-65).

The gonda is one of the most popular dances performed at funeral feasts. As many as four, five or six bumbumbu drums (single-membrane), five or six mshondo (single-membrane), a pair of kaamuri or chapuo (both double-membraned) are used. A daba (piece of old metal) or upatu (gong) is used to set the tempo for the drums. The gonda is danced by both women and men. The women are usually young and are dressed in white hando and bead ornaments. The male performers dress in white waistcloths and wear metal rattles (njuga) and armlets made of the end of cows' tails tied above their elbows. The ankle rattles are said to give pleasure and to reflect the 'youthfulness' (uvulana) of the players. The dance is a fast one in which men and women form two lines facing each other, and from



these two lines a male dancer and female dancer advance towards each other shaking their shoulders as they do so. They move closer and closer to each other until they are almost touching and shake their shoulders vigorously; they then dance back to their respective lines and another couple begin the same step. The dance continues in this manner until the players are exhausted.

Other dances performed are the umete, mavunyo, senganya, namba, to name just a few. Most dances utilise more or less the same number and type of instruments.

(ii) Commemoration Ceremony

A second funeral or commemoration ceremony, called nyere za mwezi (or mabulu or lusinga), takes place at a propitious period (determined by several factors such as the financial position of the host; whether or not the harvest has been good, etc) and only when the new moon has been sighted. The ceremony usually takes place a month after the first funeral, but may take place three months later. The feast, however, can take much longer to be hosted as this depends on the financial situation of the bereaved family. In some cases, feasts have been held several years later.

The literal meaning of nyere za mwezi is 'hair of the moon' and refers to the time when the heads of the bereaved family members are shaved (this is done both during burial of a deceased and at the end of the mourning period). The hair is allowed to grow during the mourning period and is not shaved or cropped. Nyere za mwezi marks the end of the mourning period and the start of the 'remembrance' feast. This ceremony is not only important in marking the end of the mourning, but is the time to 'remember' (kumbukira) the deceased. More importantly, this is the time when the property of the deceased is redistributed and a new head of the home appointed, and it is the time when the bereaved members are also reintegrated into the community. All restrictions placed on the bereaved are lifted after the feast is over (see also Hertz 1960, 58,61,64).

There appears to be a deeper implication in the hosting of a nyere za mwezi feast, that is, other than marking the end of the mourning and remembering the deceased; there is an implication that

the deceased has come back to the community, but must still be 'escorted' out of it to another world until such time as he or she again returns to the community and is fully reintegrated into it by the installing of a memorial post. According to one elder, everyone in the world has nyere za mwezi and he explained it in this way:

Everywhere people have nyere za mwezi; even these Europeans say they have grief. From the time we opened our eyes ... our grandfathers used to do that ... fathers follow the path of their grandfathers ... nyere za mwezi is the end of mourning. It is like when a guest has come and now the guest is escorted; it is like escorting someone, like escorting a guest.

Among the Mijikenda, and indeed among a lot of African groups, when a visitor is about to leave, he or she is escorted some distance from the home; it would be unthought of to say goodbye to a guest just outside one's door. During the first funeral feast the songs and dances performed are said to 'escort' the deceased to his or her new home; similarly, songs and dances performed at a 'remembrance' feast are said to be songs to 'shave' the members of the bereaved family, and to 'escort' the deceased.

It would seem that in the past, the nyere za mwezi may have also marked the installation of memorial posts, but this practice appears to have radically changed, so that memorial posts are now installed only when afflictions strike families, or when ancestors appear in dreams to descendants. However, it is possible that the installation of memorial posts (vigango and mikoma) may have always been as a response to afflictions and that what is said to have been the case was only in theory rather than practice. In other words, it is possible that the installation of memorial posts, only as a response to affliction, is a latter-day pragmatic concession to a declining tradition; or it is simply the difference between theory and practice; that is, no one ever did install them at that stage, merely that everyone knew that in theory.

The commemoration feast lasts the same number of days as the funeral feast, four days for a woman and five days for a man (some families who are unable to afford a big feast may have a ceremony that lasts just three days). The names of the days are the same as those for the first funeral feast. The important days are the shaving and slaughtering. The shaving of the heads of the bereaved family takes place right on top of the grave of the deceased and

appropriate songs and dances are performed by people who dance round the grave.

The slaughtering day is also called kupoza wembe ('to cool the razors'). The animals for the feast are killed over the grave and libations are made to the deceased and to the ancestors. One elder explained that it is important that prayers are made to the ancestors so that they may be benevolent. If there are memorial posts in the compound, a special animal will be killed there and libations and offerings made there; other animals will be slaughtered on the grave of the deceased. The meat is then given to the women to cook; the slaughterers (ritual elders) keep various parts of the animals for themselves and they also keep the sacrificial animals, i.e. those specially killed as offerings to ancestors.

Appropriate songs and dances are performed and are said to express the happiness and joy (raha) of the deceased; and if there should be no songs and dances people will say that the relatives of the deceased did not love their deceased relatives. In addition, there must be palm wine. According to one informant, if these should be absent, people will whisper and say 'today is the feast of so and so and there is no palm wine and dances and songs; this child has erred badly; he will be cursed'. The nyere za mwezi not only, yet again, publicly demonstrates that the family is in a financial position to host a feast and, therefore, honour the friends and relatives of the deceased, but that the family has fulfilled its familial obligations and have given their deceased honour and respect.

Once the feast is over, the property of the deceased is divided. In the case of deceased women, only her personal items, such as clothing and ornaments are divided. The property of a man is inherited by his oldest brother who becomes a guardian of his brother's children. This brother also inherits the wives of his deceased brother and assumes the role as the head of the household. According to Mijikenda men, the women are inherited to that 'they don't go without clothes and their cooking pots'. They also say that if a woman does not want to go to the brother inheriting, she can choose to go to another who will have her; but this appears to be rare. On the day the women are inherited, they are taken to the river and ritually cleansed with special herbal medicines; this is

very important and people say that this must be done before the women can engage in sexual relations with their new husbands. If the cleansing does not take place and the women engage in sexual relations, terrible illness will result and affect the man. The cleansing marks the end of the mourning prohibitions placed on the bereaved women; for example, a bereaved woman can never shake hands with men and with unmarried women or married women who are pregnant or childless during this period.

## Chapter Nine: Healing

The Mijikenda believe that all forms of illness are caused by malevolent spirits called mapepo (sing. pepo) which invade and possess the body or head. The most malevolent spirits are said to be those that possess the head, while those that possess the body are less evil. The word pepo refers both to malevolent spirits, and is also the proper name of one particular spirit, Pepo, said to be of Arab origin, which invades the head. Evil spirits should not be confused with ancestral spirits called makoma (sing. koma) which, though capricious and troublesome at times and which can cause afflictions if angered, are not considered evil. The words makoma and mikoma should not be confused. Makoma refers specifically to ancestral spirits and mikoma to memorial posts representing these ancestral spirits. The plural prefixes ma and mi refer to animate and inanimate things respectively. The singular koma is the same whether one is talking about ancestors or memorial posts. Koma is also the proper name of one particular pepo said to cause insomnia.

Mental disturbance is seen as intrusion or invasion and possession of the head by pepo za kitswa (literally, 'spirits of the head'). Most 'spirits of the head' are said to always be Arab-speaking, and are invariably Muslim. These spirits are described as more powerful than African types, which appear not to possess the head, but usually possess the body. Possession of the head is considered a serious affliction which necessitates a lengthy course of treatment which includes therapy (this involves intense dialogue between the healer and the patient), herbal treatment and magical ornaments and finally an important exorcism ceremony called ngoma za pepo (literally, 'spirit dance'). It is said that most people possessed by 'spirits of the head' ultimately become healers because this is what the possessing spirits desire.

Possession of the body is said to be caused by pepo za mwiri ('spirits of the body') which manifest themselves in various ailments, such as malaria, whooping cough, arthritis, smallpox etc. Bodily possession is treated by healers using therapy, herbal medicine and ornaments; but this type of possession does not normally call for a ngoma za pepo.

All afflictions are diagnosed by male or female specialist healers, waganga (sing. muganga), whose initial aim is to establish the identity of the spirit, after which a course of appropriate treatment is prescribed. The identity of the spirit is established by the healer literally speaking to the spirit, saying such words as 'we are here to listen to your wishes; reveal yourself, we are friends', etc. The spirit is said to respond by speaking to the muganga via the possessed person who speaks in the particular tongue of the spirit within him or her.

In addition to spirit possession, the Mijikenda believe that there is 'evil' and 'good' medicine, and that some individuals have the power to bewitch others. 'Evil' medicine (uchawi) is said to be practised by witches (mchawi, pl. wachawi), who may be male or female, in great secrecy. 'Good' medicine (uganga) is practised by recognised doctors (muganga, pl. waganga) whose aim is to cure a person, unlike wachawi who are bent on destroying a person or that person's property. Sometimes individuals who fall sick suspect that they have been victims of uchawi and as a result consult waganga in order to be cured. Whether uchawi and wachawi actually exist is a good question. What is certain is that people actually believe that they exist and moreover are convinced that certain individuals in the community have this power. No one would admit to this, of course, but the fact that people believe in their existence is at least as important as whether there is indeed any artifact, uchawi, and a person, mchawi. It is also possible that the distinction between uchawi and uganga is not clear-cut in practice, given that someone particularly adept in legitimate medicine might use it for illegitimate purposes. The reality of uchawi and wachawi may be that people believe them to exist. Whether the reality is any more than that is essentially unprovable given that no one accused of being mchawi would freely admit to it.

During my field research I heard about uchawi on two occasions. It is a subject which people are reluctant to discuss. On one occasion, I was told about an old man (who died a few months after I arrived in the area) who was said to be a 'dangerous' person. It was rumoured that he had been responsible for the deaths of at least four people in the community. In one case, it was said that he had enticed a young man to the seashore and had killed him there.

Though people were afraid of him, they had to continue to act as if they did not suspect him, just in case he became angry and bewitched them. After his death, people were greatly relieved and were more prone to talking openly about their suspicions. It is worth noting that one of the sons of this old man has an earthenware pot called kifudu which is used in healing. The owner of the pot explained that the pot is used for divination and can be used in the detection of thieves, for example. This pot is discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter.

A year later, in September 1985, a Giriama muganga, called Fatuma Abdalla (formerly Katso Kanyoi, who remarried and became a Muslim, and now practises together with her Muslim husband as Muslim waganga) informed me that I should be extremely careful of one male muganga I had interviewed in 1984, and at whose home I had attended a ngoma za pepo conducted by him and Fatuma. She told me that it was generally believed that he was practising uchawi. The nephew of the man was also quite reluctant to accompany me to his uncle's home, and would usually urge me not to stay there. Whether this had anything to do with the possibility of his uncle being a mchawi is uncertain.

During periods of transition it seems the efficacy of medicine is highly regarded and necessary to deal with uncertainties that emerge during such transition. At such periods the belief in 'evil' and 'good' medicine seems to afford people a convenient means of explaining and finding a way out of their predicaments. Among the Mijikenda, it has often happened that people in conflict with their community have chosen to opt out by claiming possession by alien spirits. Thus, there are many instances when people have become possessed by Arab spirits which has necessitated the person being exorcised by a Muslim muganga, and thereafter embracing the Islamic faith; the usual explanation for this is that the possessing spirit demands that its host becomes a Muslim. Thus, such people have been able to distance themselves from their communities and the possible tensions within these communities. Adoption of Islam in this manner has been seen as an effective way for Mijikenda entrepreneurs, in particular, to break with the traditional Mijikenda system.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the complete breakdown of the Mijikenda social and

political system based on the Council of Elders, all medicine was restricted to ritual experts, the Vaya and Fisi. Of course this does not mean that people did not attempt to practise both 'evil' and 'good' medicine, but anyone else suspected of practising and using such medicine, whether for good or evil, was liable to a heavy penalty, sometimes even death. Severe punishment took the form of doctored ingredients and painful ordeals (such as the burning of the palm, for example). The authority of the Vaya and Fisi (hyena) elders inspired so much fear, that they were able to more or less confine the control of the power of medicine to themselves; and they were, therefore, able to capitalise on this for the maintenance of their political authority. These elders kept themselves totally cut off from the rest of the community; people were forbidden to go anywhere near their secret meeting places. Any animals straying anywhere near were immediately confiscated and consumed by the elders. The Fisi elders controlled the most potent oath called the Oath of the Hyena (Kiraho cha Fisi). This oath was used in the detection of evil medicine and in serious disputes and crimes. According to Brantley, the Fisi oath relied on a powerful medicine called mbare and was used as an ordeal between the accuser and accused in direct accusations, and it was the final appeal for justice.<sup>2</sup> Such was the fear of the Fisi oath that elders were able to effectively check and suppress the practise or intention to practise evil (i.e. uchawi) medicine which may have threatened the community.

In the early 1900s, a period of intense social upheaval, uganga was extensively used by medical practitioners. The introduction of stringent British policies during this period heightened the tensions already present in a society that was undergoing dramatic change. The period was one that saw an increasing cleavage between the elders and other members of the community; prosperous traders had managed to establish their own villages and had been able to consolidate their power through the incorporation of a large number of dependents and followers; there were more scattered homes and villages than before. With the establishment of the East African Protectorate and the imposition of colonial rule in 1895, the Mijikenda began to experience further and greater difficulties. One of the most dramatic effects of



colonial rule was the severing of Mijikenda trade with other coastal peoples; colonial rule began to confine them to areas of low productivity and to remote areas, quite out of reach of their former markets. The British policies of 1901 and 1902, principally the Hut Tax and the Headmen's Ordinance, motivated elders to try and mobilise people to oppose these measures. As was pointed out in Chapter three of this study, the levies were essentially a method by which the British hoped to drive the Mijikenda into the wage market (to provide labour for British plantations, the building of the railway and roads). When people refused to pay these levies, punitive measures, such as the burning of homes, were undertaken by the colonial administration. In 1913, the government attempted to pressurise the Giriama to provide 1,000 porters for the Carrier Corps. At the same time the government proposed to evacuate the Giriama from a relatively fertile region to a dry region in order to make way for British plantations. All these measures stimulated the Mijikenda to opposition, and in 1913, a woman named Mekatilili convened a meeting to urge the people to resist these policies and requirements. The government immediately labelled Mekatilili a 'witch'. The District Officer in Giriama was prompted to state that it was 'probable that the medicine men, or waganga, who are generally more awake than the common herd have instigated the people to the policy of opposition to Government'.<sup>3</sup> A violent confrontation ensued between the police and the people. Mekatilili and her main male supporter were promptly arrested and exiled to the Western Province of Kenya, where they were held for over five years.

In 1925 the British set up the Kenya Colony Witchcraft Ordinance No. 23/1925.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter they dealt with offenders using legal means, but often relying on local 'witchdoctors' to assist in routing out the offenders. This colonial legislation imposed the penalty of imprisonment for periods up to 10 years for various offences and fines up to 1,000 shillings, with or without imprisonment (23/1925, Sections 2-8). Under this section, an offender also faced deportation. Under section 2, a 5 year prison sentence was imposed on 'witchdoctors' who had the ability to cause fear, annoyance or injury to another in mind, person or property. Under section 3, a person professing knowledge of 'witchcraft' or 'charms', or who was in a position to advise how to 'bewitch' or

injure persons, animals or property, or who supplied 'witchcraft' articles was liable to 10 years in prison. The possession of 'magic', or the accusation of, or practices of 'magic' carried lesser sentences.

At the height of the Mau Mau Emergency in the 1950s, the British mounted anti-'witchcraft' campaigns, believing that 'witchcraft' was being used to mobilise people into a political force. Such activities were interpreted by the British as a 'cover for political activity'.<sup>5</sup>

In present-day, post-colonial Kenya, 'witchcraft' offences are still dealt with using the same colonial laws. In 1977, for example, the District Commissioner of Kilifi District banned traditional dances which were said to instil fear and to promote 'devilish activities' such as 'witchcraft'.<sup>6</sup> One of the dances banned was ngoma za pepo. Lately, however, the government has allowed 'traditional doctors' (waganga) to be formally registered and licensed. Despite this legal 'acceptance' of traditional medicine, the eradication of 'witchcraft' activities continues.

In Shariani where I conducted some interviews, I found that some European farmers living in the locality, occasionally resort to traditional doctors in an attempt to recover stolen property. Tony Pape is such a farmer; he has lived in Kuruwitu for over 20 years. He informed me that he often calls upon waganga if something is stolen from his house or farm. He knows that people so fear the ordeals involved in seeking out an offender, that the offenders invariably come out and admit their guilt. Tony makes sure to have the word spread about that he has called in a muganga to help him to recover his missing property, or to reveal the thief. The muganga comes and performs certain rituals in and around the farm and the house until he or she is satisfied that through these the offender will be revealed. It is not that Tony believes in the power of the doctors as such, but he is exploiting a sensitive situation in which an individual may be accused and therefore be ostracised from the community. According to Tony, and a few other non-Mijikenda I interviewed, it is extremely rare for a Mijikenda to steal. The people who are more likely to steal are strangers living in Mijikenda localities; these are usually people from other parts of Kenya who work for the European-owned plantations (such

as the sisal and cashewnut), or as house-servants for the Europeans. These people appear not to believe in the efficacy of Mijikenda uganga. The difference in social behaviour may also lie in the fact that the Mijikenda are still part of the community which enforces codes of behaviour on them, unlike the non-Mijikenda who are alienated from theirs.

In the course of field research I watched several diagnostic and therapeutic sessions conducted by a Giriama woman muganga called Katso Kanyoi (now Fatuma Abdalla).<sup>7</sup> In addition to these healing sessions, I attended spirit possession dances (ngoma za pepo), also conducted by her. Fatuma is in her middle thirties and has been practising as a muganga for several years. According to her, she was very young when she felt the urge to become a muganga. She became possessed by pepo za kitswa and was subsequently treated and initiated as a muganga. She expressed her love of practising medicine, and said she has the power to communicate with spirits of all kinds. She appears to be very popular as a healer in Shariani. She has a very engaging vivacious personality and was very willing to explain things to me. Her second husband, Salim Abdalla, originally from Rabai, is a well-known muganga who works full-time for the Ministry of Works as a labourer. According to Fatuma, her husband is a renowned Muslim muganga, who can communicate very effectively with Muslim spirits.

Fatuma explained that individual spirits each have their own characteristics. The spirits have names, sometimes indicating the type of affliction they cause. Arab spirits are said to be the most powerful of the spirits, while African spirits are less so. Fatuma named some of these Arab spirits as being: Mwarabu ('Arab'), Mwalimu ('teacher'), Mpemba (person from the island of Pemba), Barawa (person from Barawa in Somalia), Mshihiri (a person from Sheher in south Arabia; the Sheher usually engage in manual trades such as labouring, fishing, etc). There are numerous African spirits. Some are much more powerful than others. Many of these spirits bear the names of African peoples who used to raid Mijikenda villages. Some of them are: Masai, Musambala, Mtaita, Mkavi, Mugala and Mkamba.<sup>8</sup> Fatuma named some spirits which cause specific illness: the Mwanamdungu is said to cause muscular weakness. Three Digo spirits named Nyari, Dena and Kiliku cause

weakness of various parts of the legs. Two others, Shera and Lika bring on madness (therefore are 'spirits of the head') and coldness of the body. Insomnia is said to result from a troublesome spirit called Koma which is appeased by being offered a piece of blue cloth fringed with blue and white beads. (This is probably a reference to ancestral spirits which are said to appear in dreams to trouble their descendents and to claim their places in the home). The sanzua spirit is said to cause anaemia. The Mwangalamwangala produces itching of the body. Impotence in men is said to result from the Balushi spirit. The jangamizi also causes impotence in men, sterility in women, and vomiting and diarrhoea in children who may die as a result. The spirit is said to be bisexual and must be propitiated by offerings of a set of clay figures. These clay figures are discussed below.

One of the therapeutic sessions I watched in 1984 involved a woman whose child was sick. The woman was evidently very worried (Plate: 67). One of the explanations for a child's illness is infidelity of one or both parents. A woman is more liable to be blamed for a child's illness than a man. In this instance, it appeared that the woman was not very happy about the conduct of her husband. The muganga (Plate: 66) began by asking questions, and then gradually went into a sort of trance, a point at which she was communicating with the spirits (Plate: 68). At intervals, she would point to various parts of her own body where she herself would feel a pain, thus indicating that area as one locus of the patient's problem. On the floor of the therapy room was a winnowing tray placed upside down, the convex of which was covered with fine sand (Plate: 71). There was in addition a reed shaker (kayamba), a calabash rattle, a bunch of twigs tied together, and some powdered substance in a small film canister. As she went through various questions the doctor would pick up the reed rattle (Plate: 69) shake it and sing, then lay it down and pick up the bunch of twigs and sniff it (Plate: 69); at other times she would pick up the calabash rattle and shake it while singing (Plate: 72). At some point in the session, she drew patterns on the sand on the tray (Plate: 70), sprinkled some of the powdered substance over the patterns, took a pinch of the substance in her nose, and began to diagnose the woman's problems. The patterns were mainly concentric circles, and zigzags

(Plate: 71). (Cf. Champion 1967, 35, as observed in 1914).<sup>9</sup> The communication between the muganga and the patient became quite intense at times, particularly at the trance state during which time the doctor talked in tongues. The whole session took about an hour, by which time the doctor was physically exhausted (Plate: 74). As soon as the woman had left, two more patients (men) came in, and the session lasted another hour.

One interesting aspect of the therapy (involving just conversation and divination) was that people kept on coming in to greet Fatuma, who would stop to greet them. Each visitor would greet her and say: 'you are doing some work' and Fatuma would respond, 'yes, I'm doing a little work'. The visitor would say 'let the work continue' and leave. This interruption did not appear to distract Fatuma from her work. This example, serves to reinforce the accepted notion that the work of the waganga is done in the open, unlike uchawi which is practised in secret.

Another form of treatment I witnessed took place in 1985 and concerned a woman who was experiencing difficulties conceiving. In this instance Fatuma was assisted by one of her male apprentices. He drew a large square, with the corners slightly curved inward, on the floor. At one end of the square was drawn a cross and at the other a semi-circle touching the border line, and out of which extended radiating lines, to form what looked like the sun. The square was then divided into six sections by five lines drawn horizontally across. The inner four sections had objects placed in them, leaving the outer sections empty. One object was a shell; the next was an oval-shaped object out of which stuck porcupine quills, and the other two were pieces of gnarled wood (Fig. 31). The patient was then drenched with a mixture of water and medicinal leaves which Fatuma had prepared by warming the water and constantly squeezing the leaves between her fingers to make the liquid frothy. The woman was then instructed to place her legs on either side of the 'cross' so that the 'cross' was between her feet. She was instructed to step on each object in such a manner as to allow both feet to touch the object at the same time; this meant almost balancing on the item. She had to walk to the other end of the square, stepping on each of the objects in this manner. Once she reached the other side of the square, she was asked to repeat the

performance. Some medicine was poured on her, starting from the head down. She repeated the process at least four times, after which the apprentice took her outside and made circular cuts on her shoulder blades and removed the skin, leaving raw circular patches which were at least half an inch in diameter. She came back into the room and some blueish medicine was rubbed into the wounds. According to the muganga this was just the beginning of the treatment, and that after the full course had been carried out, the women would be able to have children.

When a person is possessed by the pepo za kitswa, the treatment is much more complicated. This type of possession is said to be less frequent, and when it does afflict a person, it is said that the person desires, through the spirit, to become a muganga. In the majority of cases, therefore, people possessed in this manner, do end up as healers. A person possessed by 'spirits of the head' behaves in a very anti-social manner, acting in a way that would not normally be accepted as proper behaviour; sometimes the person can act in a very violent manner. It seems that more women than men are possessed by 'spirits of the head', and when a woman is affected, she very often berates her husband in public, using words and actions that would normally be socially unacceptable, and which would, under normal circumstances, lead a husband to give her a beating. People said that the most evident expression of possession by 'spirits of the head' is the speaking of a foreign tongue by the possessed person. Healers say that the tongue spoken by these spirits are ancient ones which no one but the healers themselves can understand, though people may be able to identify a word or two which would indicate what language it might be.

As stated earlier, the initial diagnosis by the healer is intended to establish the identity of the spirit. The healer communicates with the spirit, asking it to identify itself. When the spirit has done so through its host, the healer asks it what it wants, promising that everything it desires will be given it. The spirit is then said to enumerate all the various things it wants, ending with a demand that a ngoma za pepo must be conducted at which time all the objects wanted by it will be brought and offered. After the healer has established the identity and demands of the spirit, enough time is allowed for the possessed person's family to acquire

all the things requested, and a tentative date is set for the ceremony - this date, however, remains flexible because the dance must be performed at a propitious time determined by the healer, and must always take place at the sighting of a new moon.

The whole ceremony of exorcism is referred to as kupunga pepo ('to exorcise spirits'). The calling of the spirit into the head of the patient is called kupandisha pepo kichawani ('to cause the spirit to come into the head'); this is done in order that the healer may speak to it. The method of making the spirit speak is through some form of medicine. A mixture of various substances is boiled and the patient is made to sit close to the pot; he or she is completely covered in a white sheet so that the vapour can envelop him or her. Some sweet-smelling resin (ubani) may also be used for this purpose. At a ngoma za pepo the healer assures the spirit that all the things it requested have been obtained and are ready to be given to it, during the ceremony.

Various cloths are used during the ceremony. The patient is first brought to the scene of the dance and he or she is completely covered in a white cloth which is tied in a peak at the head. Before the spirit is 'called' into the head of the patient, the patient is dressed in red (the implication here is that the spirit has gone to another part of the body). The last colour used in the ceremony is black. The significance of the sequence of colours proceeding from white to red to black (or dark blue) is unclear. According to one informant, the white represents the spirit's goodwill; the red represents the particular spirit possessing the person, and this colour is referred to as the 'second drum' in the ngoma za pepo, at which point the spirit identifies itself. The black (or blue) cloth is said to represent the propitiation of the bad spirit which brings illness to the head and body; the colour is referred to as the 'last drum' and marks the end of the ngoma za pepo. Castor-oil is poured on the patient at this point. The oil is said to appease the spirit and to drive it from the patient's body.

I attended two of these exorcising dances in 1984. At both occasions, women were possessed, and both by Barawa spirits (said to be of Somali origin; Barawa is a town in Somalia). The ceremonies were the same at both occasions. One dance took place at night at the home of a male muganga (Mwanjale Nduria) who was assisted by

Fatuma Abdalla (at that time she was still Katso Kanyoi), and the other dance took place at night at Fatuma's home. Before each of the dances began, a mortar was filled with a mixture of water and herbal medicine and placed a little way from the central place where the possessed person was to sit. An arch made out of green twigs of a wild tree called mukone (used in rituals) was constructed over the mortar. A plaited palm leaf mat was placed in the central place of ceremony. The drums were then brought out and tensioned (Plate: 75). Four drums, used specifically for ngoma za pepo, were brought out: two were double-membraned called chapuo (pl. vyapuo) and two smaller double-membraned ones called vumi; and a bumbumbu (single-membraned) (Plate: 76). An old piece of scrap tin, daba, completed the range of instruments used.

The following description is for the ngoma za pepo held at Fatuma's home on the 20th July 1984. The healers had been very busy that whole day preparing the patient for the ngoma za pepo; this took place in the privacy of the healer's special room, so it is difficult to know what went on there. When night fell, the waganga (Fatuma and another woman) came out. They wore metal rattles on their feet and had on their magical medicine objects. They instructed the drummers to prepare themselves and to start the initial drumming to inform people that the ceremony was about to begin (Plate: 77). People started gathering when the drums were played. At about eight o'clock the patient was brought out of the waganga's room, and sat on the mat with her legs stretched out rigidly in front of her (Plate: 78). She was completely covered in a brand new white cloth which covered her face totally and was tied in a peak at the head (Plate: 79). When the patient was seated, the healers gave the signal for the drumming to start in earnest. The daba player initiated the tempo for the drums, and the drummers took the cue. One of the waganga began the singing and the audience joined in the chorus. Both female waganga began to dance while the patient continued to sit quietly. The male muganga sat next to the patient and by his side was a basket (mukoba) containing various medicines and objects for the ceremony. As the drumming intensified, the patient's whole body began to tremble, and then to jerk spasmodically until she got up and danced. The healers urged the relatives of the patient to help her to dance. As the drumming



became more and more intense, people would suddenly dart out of the gathering and dance as if they themselves were in a trance. The patient would suddenly stop and complain that the rhythm or the tune was not pleasing to 'her spirit' either because the drummers had lost the tempo, or slackened in their playing. When the patient became tired she would sit down and the healers would talk to her and pour medicine over her. The healers themselves, and indeed anyone in the gathering, would frequently go to the mortar of medicine and splash themselves with it.

At one point in the ceremony, the patient was instructed in how to divine. She was required to memorise patterns which the healers drew on sand placed on top of a winnowing tray. One of the healers, in this instance Fatuma, drew various concentric circles out of which projected lines, and then erased them; the patient had to then repeat them until the healers were satisfied that she had drawn them correctly. More and more patterns, some zig-zag, some linear, were drawn and the patient tried to remember them and to redraw them. At a later stage in the ceremony, a white porcelain plate was brought out of the healers' bag. It was covered in very intricate geometric patterns (mainly zig-zag, triangular types) done in brown substance. Some special liquid medicine was poured over the patterns and they were erased with a finger. The liquid was given to the patient to drink (as is always the case, the healers must taste the medicine themselves before giving it to the patient; this is an assurance that the substance is not poisonous). At another point in the ceremony, the patient was covered in a red cloth. Later still she was covered in a dark blue cloth, and castor-oil was poured over her. This marked the end of the ceremony. The whole performance lasted from eight o'clock in the evening to early morning.

In September 1985 I watched Salim Abdalla (husband of Fatuma) diagnose a woman who was said to be possessed. The woman was accompanied by her husband. She sat down on the floor of Salim's house, and she acted in a manner as to suggest she was 'mentally disturbed'. She was decidedly belligerent and kept on scowling and shrugging her shoulders violently, and clicking her tongue angrily at her husband. The healer began by sprinkling rose water (commonly used by Muslim healers) over her and uttered some opening lines of

the standard Islamic prayer. He then started to communicate with the spirit, in what he said was Arabic. The woman began to speak in a strange tongue, which sounded just like gibberish and which the healer said was some form of Arabic.<sup>10</sup> The woman became more and more cantankerous, berating her husband and accusing him of having never married her in the proper manner, and that he had not paid the right amount of bridewealth, nor had he given her a proper wedding feast. The healer asked the spirit what it wanted, and the reply was that it wanted a pure gold ring; two 'horses' (i.e. goats; the choice of goats to represent the horses probably lies in the fact that goats are used in ritual ceremonies); and a chano (a wooden circular tray given to the groom and bride on their wedding day). The healer asked the husband whether it was true what his wife had said and the man said that he had done all he could for his wife. According to him, his wife had already cost him a lot of money because of her illness. He said he had spent over 28,000 shillings (£1,400) in hospital bills, but that the treatment had not cured her. He related how for a long time she had suffered with strange pains in her stomach and had had lumps in her abdomen; the lumps kept on moving from one side to the other. She had been operated on, but her problems had not ceased and for this reason they had decided to consult a healer. A tentative date was agreed upon by Salim and the man as to when the ngoma za pepo would take place.

During this same period, September 1985, I also talked to one of my 1984 informants, Aisha Nassor, who related how she had become very ill during the month of August 1985 and that her illness had been diagnosed as possession by a Pemba spirit (said to originate from the island of Pemba). During the diagnosis, it had been established that the spirit wanted a pure gold ring, a white garment and turban; a chano of sweatmeats (usually referred to as chano cha pepo); one brown 'horse' (i.e. goat) and one white one; and finally a ngoma za pepo. In addition to all these things, the spirit also wanted its host to pray five times a day as all Muslims ought. By September the two goats had been acquired (the cost of which had ranged from 300 to 400 shillings each) and the gold ring (costing 1,600 shillings; equivalent to £80) had been made. Aisha informed me that the ngoma za pepo was to be held sometime in October 1985,

during which time the spirit would be presented with all the items. The 'horses' would be ridden by the spirit during the dance: this actually means that the possessed person mounts the goats and rides them during the dance (it has been suggested that this act may have sexual connotations).<sup>11</sup> While waiting for the ngoma za pepo, Aisha was undergoing therapy sessions, and because she hoped to become a practising muganga at the end she was also being taught various things by the muganga treating her (I was told that most people who become possessed by 'spirits of the head' end up as waganga). Aisha related how, at the age of 15, she had almost believed she was about to die; according to her, she had seen an Arab man, dressed in a long white garment and wearing a turban, walk past her carrying a walking stick. Aisha had immediately felt that the man was walking over her grave, for it was not a man, but a spirit. Aisha told her parents who in turn consulted a muganga and she had been given some form of treatment. When Aisha became possessed in 1984, she said she saw the same figure, and she said that this was a sign that she would become a muganga. Aisha's husband, a Mswahili, told me that he truly believes in spirits and spirit possession and that the spirits are not to be trifled with or disregarded. He had no hesitation in buying the items requested for the ceremony.

Waganga normally prescribe certain magical medicine for their patients to wear; these are used in conjunction with the treatment; sometimes they are given to the patient soon after the diagnosis of the problem and sometimes after the treatment. Magical medicine occurs in several forms; some are simple pouches, which are made by the apprentices of the muganga, containing special medicine prepared by the muganga; some are beaded necklaces or ornaments for the arms, wrists, ankles or legs; these are also made by the apprentices, or by the waganga themselves. There are metal ornaments which are commissioned from metal-makers and which are subsequently treated (either by steeping in special medicine or by other means known only to the waganga or their apprentices). Some of these magical medicines look the same as ordinary ornaments worn purely for decoration, but the wearers know which were acquired for what purpose.

The simplest type of magical medicine are the pouches containing

various substances (Fig. 22). These pouches are attached to lengths of fibre, or to strands of beads and worn tied around the upper arm, the wrist, round the waist, or the ankles or worn as necklaces. The pouches are usually made from cloth or leather, but sometimes the medicine may be rolled up in a piece of paper and then covered with cotton thread worked in a type of chain-stitch. These types of pouch objects are collectively called pengu (or pingu). The cloth type are called kidemu (pl. videmu), which simply translates as 'rag'. Most Mijikenda children have a small magical medicine pouch tied round their wrists, waists or worn round the neck, which are said to ward off evil spirits. One type tied to children's wrists is said to prevent illness resulting from a husband's infidelity. This magical medicine wards off a disease called mavingane. It is said that if a husband has an affair with another woman and comes home and holds his child, his wife, if she is pregnant, will give birth to a child who will become very ill and may even die. A man courting another man's wife may give his lover one of these magical medicine objects for her to tie on her child's arm so that no sickness results from the affair. One night one of my informants beat his young wife very badly because he said she was having an affair. Asked how he knew this, he said that he had noticed that his wife had tied a black magical medicine pouch on the wrist of his child. He was beating the wife because she had refused to name her lover, and had denied she was having an affair.

Other types of magical medicine which take the form of ornaments can be itemised as follows:

(a) Kidanga (pl. vidanga) (Plate: 41; Fig. 16)

This type of ornament is used both as pure ornament and as magical medicine. They are made from iron, aluminium, brass or copper. These ornaments are ordered from specialist craftsmen and then magically treated by waganga. Vidanga are said to be a protection against evil spirits. These magical ornaments, including pouches and other types of magical medicine objects, are used as protection against 'spirits of the body'.

(b) Kivele (pl vivele) (Plate: 38; Fig. 22)

Vivele are made of leather, beads and cowrie shells. The

beads used in these magical medicine (and indeed in other types) are usually red, white and blue (or black). Some have a combination of white and red beads, and others have a combination of white and blue, and some have a combination of all three. Most vivele are distinguished by the use of leather (and sometimes rawhide from a specially slaughtered cow), cowrie shells and copper or brass chain or wire. The leather is usually rectangular or square in shape and the beads and cowrie shells are sewn on it. It is usually suspended on a locally made metal chain. Vivele are normally worn as necklaces and are said to protect the wearer from an evil spirit called Mugalla, named after the Galla who used to raid Mijikenda villages.

(c) Korongo (or mukorongo, pl. mikorongo) (Fig. 17)

Mikorongo are metal anklets often decorated with deep grooved spiral lines, the twist of which is cut into the iron with a file. It can also be made from aluminium and brass, and is sometimes decorated with incised patterns and inlaid with ebony. Mikorongo are worn by old women on each ankle against an evil spirit called Mutumwa (literally, 'one who is sent', i.e. servant or slave) which could tie people by the legs and allow them to be captured (e.g. by slavers) and taken away in a dhow to be sold as slaves.

(d) Mukulewe (pl. mikulewe)

A mukulewe is a small bell, made out of iron or brass, worn on the arm by old women as protection against an evil spirit which demobilizes the arms.

(e) Kirangi (pl. virangi) (Fig. 20)

Virangi are necklets made of copper wire coiled round in a continuous spiral. Virangi usually combine white, red and blue beads. The combination of red, white and blue beads on medical ornaments may be a further example of the tendency for red, white and black to be juxtaposed in ritual contexts in which there is mediation of the everyday world and the spirits.

(f) Metal Bracelets (Fig. 21)

Certain metal bracelets are also worn as protection against Arab spirits. According to Fatuma Abdalla, these bracelets have patterns which distinguish the particular spirits. A copper bracelet for the Barawa spirit is distinguished by a diamond motif which is incised into the bracelet (Fig. 21, No. 1). This bracelet is about one quarter of an inch in width and about seven and a half inches in length when stretched out. It also has a V-shaped pattern. The copper bracelet for the Pemba spirit is distinguished by a star (nyota), though it also combines the diamond shape (Fig. 21, No. 2,3). The Pepo spirit is appeased with a bracelet of white metal (silver or aluminium) with a scalloped (i.e. fluted) motif (Fig. 21, No. 5). The Mshihiri spirit's bracelet is made of copper and iron metal twisted together (Fig. 21, No. 4).

(g) Kidonga (pl. vidonga) (Figs. 23-30)

Apart from magical medicine objects worn by patients and waganga, the doctors themselves have a great deal of other paraphernalia for their uganga. Some of the objects are containers for their medicines and others are used purely for divination. Stoppers of medicine containers vary considerably and include rolled-up pieces of paper, short pieces of the midrib of the palm leaf, pieces of shaped wood, sculptural ones usually with relatively naturalistic representation of the human face. These sculptural stoppers are commissioned by waganga from specialist carvers. The faces are often well-carved with well-defined features (Figs. 23-30). Sometimes the features are very exaggerated (Figs. 24,25); sometimes the features are more or less schematic (Fig. 23). The main body of the medicine container is a calabash which, in many cases, is naturally constricted at the top section; and when the sculptural stopper is put on, the whole container actually resembles a human figure! Most people said the carved stoppers are used purely for ornament, though some informants said that medicine in a container with a carved stopper is more powerful (unfortunately these types of sculptural stoppers have practically disappeared because waganga with these types of containers have sometimes been arrested by the police and charged with practising 'witchcraft').

When waganga use these calabash containers and stoppers for divination, they put three castor-oil seeds into the container which contains some special liquid. The stopper is put on and the muganga begins to divine when the stopper starts to move up and down: what happens is that the castor-oil seeds swell and react with the liquid and this causes the liquid to bubble and froth. When the froth appears it is said the kidonga is speaking or crying.

(h) Kifudu

A clay pot called kifudu is used by some waganga in divination. This is a similar pot as that used traditionally by old women as a musical instrument (also called the women's mwanza). The kifudu is a simple earthenware pot, made by women, and which is treated so that it can be used as a magical object. It is round in shape and stands about a foot high with a fairly small mouth. According to an owner of such a pot, Charo Kazungu, his kifudu pot is inhabited by a spirit called Koma za Wote Washarifu (the spirit of all the Washarifu). Washarifu are esteemed people and the word refers to descendents of Muhammad. A Sharifu person is said to be noble, respectable and of excellent character. (Cf. Madan's Swahili-English dictionary, 1971 (reprint of 1939), 417). Charo is himself a Muslim whose main occupation is farming. Charo keeps the pot in a small shelter at the back of the house. No one is allowed to touch it and to do so is said to invite terrible illness or even death. It can only be handled by the owner who makes offerings to it, such as burning sweet-smelling resin (ubani) over which the pot is held during which time the owner praises the spirit. Anyone desiring to consult the spirit of the kifudu must supply a calabash of palm wine (i.e. kadzama) which is payment for the divination. According to Charo, the palm wine is also an offering to the spirit.

When I interviewed Charo Kazungu, he took out the pot and spoke to the spirit, first praising it as the spirit of all Washarifu and extolling its virtues as the powerful oath of Gheye; of the strength of the mwandza, which was passed down the lineage from the great-grandfather of Charo. Charo assured the spirit that we, the investigators, had come to see it and to know what it does and that as we had given a calabash of wine it should treat us well. Throughout the prayer Charo gave a step by step account of what the

kifudu is able to do, by talking to the spirit rather than to us, saying that it makes it possible for sterile women to conceive; that if people fail to be cured by hospitals then the kifudu would cure them; that if thieves want to come and steal and the kifudu was put in the field, the thieves would be seized with madness and would start to bleed from the mouth, ears, and so forth; that this was a demonstration of the power of the kifudu. Charo would stop talking now and then to blow into the pot to produce a loud muffled horn-like sound.

Charo explained that the pot was owned by his grandfather who had been given it by his grandfather. Charo's grandfather brought the pot from Digo land when he came to Giriama land where he married a Giriama woman. According to Charo, the pot must pass from grandfather to grandson and is never kept by the son. Charo was given the pot in 1983 because his grandfather's wife became a Christian and since Christianity demands that such objects must be rejected and thrown away, his grandfather gave it to him, knowing that a terrible calamity might befall the home if the kifudu was thrown away. According to Charo such a calamity could take the form of deafness in children, blindness and bleeding from the eyes, ears and nose. This description sounds very much like what people might describe as uchawi. What is worth noting is that the suspected uchawi mentioned earlier, who was believed to have been responsible for four deaths, was the father of Charo Kazungu.

Though Charo is not a practising muganga (at least from what I could gather) people come to consult him on the recommendation of waganga who may diagnose an illness as resulting from the kifudu. Special medicine and water is put into the kifudu and the incense is burned and a little offering is made as the pot is taken out of its shelter. The spirit is placated and asked to cure the sick person. The person is then given the medicine from the pot to drink. If people believe they are victims of uchawi, they seek the help of waganga who in turn may refer them to a kifudu owner. If men have sexual problems, such as impotency, a diviner will often tell them that they have been seized by the oath of the kifudu and must therefore seek help from that. At the time of treatment, during a propitious time, particularly at the end of the month, a dance, called kifudu, is held at night. The dancers sing and dance



to the accompaniment of the pot and a winnowing tray (uteo, called the women's kifudu or mwandza) containing bottle-tops, shells or broken glass bits. The pot is blown at various stages by Charo throughout the whole dance. The dancing and singing goes on until everyone is exhausted when they break off to sleep. In the morning, between six and seven-thirty, the sick person is once again treated with the medicine from the pot.

(i) The Jangamizi

The jangamizi is a malevolent bisexual spirit which possesses men, women and children (Plates: 80-88). When one is possessed by the jangamizi one is at the same time possessed by a group of lesser spirits which appear in various forms. Jangamizi spirit possession manifests itself through various symptoms which are diagnosed by a muganga.

The spirit must be appeased and exorcised through the offering of a group of clay sculptures, the main one being a bisexual figure called jangamizi, and the rest being representations of a dog, a snake, a pregnant woman (nyagu), a dead body on a stretcher (zikiri maiti), an ugly-looking human figure with a jet of flame stemming from the head (mwanga), a bird and a sheep. These clay sculptures are offered one by one at a ngoma za pepo, and only when all have been seized and subsequently been broken to smithereens is the cure effected.

According to Fatuma Abdalla, in the majority of cases, the jangamizi possesses children, particularly newly born babies and babies still in the womb. Possession of newly born babies and young children is manifested in illness which causes vomiting and diarrhoea which can result in death. In the case of babies in the womb, mothers experience perpetual miscarriages. Spirit possession of men and women is normally cross-sexual in which male manifestations of the spirit possess women, and female manifestations of the spirit possess men. Sexual intercourse between the possessed and the spirit is unfulfilled and is said to be indicated by impotence in men and sterility in women. Once a diagnosis of the symptoms brought on by jangamizi has been made, the process of healing, in the form of therapy and exorcism, begins.

The muganga commissions a trained sculptor of jangamizi to make a set of the clay figures for the ceremony. The sculptor is often an apprentice of the muganga. Great care must be taken in the making of these sculptures, otherwise the spirits may be angered and become destructive. The main figure, the jangamizi, a janus figure, stands about two to three feet high (Plate: 81). It is composed of a male and female figure joined back to back, with one set of outstretched arms with the fingers splayed out. The sexual organs are very prominent (Plates: 87,88), and the ears are large concave flaps which face forward. Under each arm is a child-figure attached to the main form with a thick coil of clay. These child-figures do not exhibit any sexual organs (Plates: 85,86). Their arms lie flush to their sides and the legs are drawn together and the ears are similar in shape to the main figures. The jangamizi stands on three feet, and its body is decorated with red and black spots (Plates: 84,87). According to Mwamau Hamisi, a maker of these clay sculptures, the jangamizi spirit is always bisexual but many appear in various forms. He claimed to have seen a jangamizi spirit once when he was walking by the seashore. He said the spirit had one breast so long it could actually sit on it. The rest of the clay sculptures take more or less naturalistic forms.

A propitious day is chosen and the sculptures that have been made are kept hidden in the bush ready for the ceremony. The exorcism is a long-drawn out performance during which time the possessed person (in the case of a child, its mother) dances, and then is led out to find a clay sculpture in his or her path. On seeing it, the person seizes it and proceeds to run with it until he or she is physically exhausted and falls down, consequently breaking the sculpture. The muganga, who has been running with the patient, helps to break the figure. They run back to the place of the ceremony where another sculpture has been placed in the pathway, and again the person seizes it and runs off with it and breaks it. The process continues in this manner until all the sculptures have been seized and broken.

The spirits are said to be attracted by the clay figures which greatly please them because they are a good representation of themselves. When the spirits see the figures, they enter them, thus leaving the afflicted person. The breaking of the sculptures

is the point at which the spirits are finally driven away (the making of these clay sculptures is described in the section on technology).

Finally, there is in the collections of the British Museum, a wooden figure, the purpose of which has some relevance to the jangamizi figure (Fig: 32; B.M. 1915, 7-3-58). It was given to the museum in 1915 by Arthur Champion. The figure is partly articulated. An iron rod passes through the base of the body and the top of the legs, so that the legs move freely. The ears and left hand are not fully sculpted and the right hand is missing. According to the accessions of the British Museum, the sculpture was made by a 'wizard' in the likeness of a person he wished to harm or perhaps kill. After manufacture, the figure was buried in a pathway frequented by that particular person, who on walking over the wooden figure was expected to fall ill. He or she would then find another 'wizard' to make a clay model in the same manner and use in a ngoma za pepo. At the climax of the dance, the 'bewitched' person would seize the clay model and rush off and throw it into the bush. He or she would fall on the ground and the 'wizard' would then sprinkle medicine on him or her, after which a cure was effected (there is no information as to what happens to the wooden figure).

FOOTNOTES

1. D. Parkin, 'Medicines and Men of Influence', 1968, pp.423-439; C. Brantley, 'An Historical Perspective of the Giriama and Witchcraft Control', 1979, pp.112-133; R. Gomm, 'Bargaining from Weakness: Spirit Possession on the South Kenya Coast', 1975, pp.530-43.
2. Brantley, Op.Cit., p.115.
3. Kenya National Archives: DC/KFI/1/3: 1913.
4. Kenya Colony Witchcraft Ordinance No.23/1915; Orde Brown, 'Witchcraft and British Colonial Law', Africa, 1935, pp.481-487.
5. Brantley, Op.Cit., p.123.
6. Daily Nation, (Nairobi), 11th November 1977.
7. I attended a spirit possession dance on the 25th May 1984 and another one on the 19th July 1984 in Shariani. In 1984 and September 1985, I attended several healing sessions at Fatuma Abdalla's (formerly Katso Kanyoi) home.
8. W.E. Taylor, Giryama Vocabulary and Collections, 1891, p.32.
9. A. Champion, The Agiryama of Kenya, 1967, p.35.
10. Al-Amin Mazrui, Linguist, attended the healing session with me. He said Salim Abdalla was speaking 'broken' Arabic, and that the woman was not speaking Arabic at all.
11. L. Lewis, Social Anthropology in Perspective: The Relevance of Social Anthropology, 1976, pp.85-91.

## Chapter Ten: Ancestral Commemoration - Mikoma

The Mijikenda erect two types of memorials to commemorate their ancestors. The simplest type is installed for non-status ancestors; memorials of this type are simply called 'sticks for ancestors' (kigongo cha koma, pl. vigongo za makoma). Ancestors who were members of a prestigious association called Luvoo (or Gohu) are distinguished by the installation of elaborately carved sculptures called vigango (sing. kigango; not to be confused with kigongo/vigongo which simply mean 'stick/sticks').

The Mijikenda normally use the words mikoma to refer to memorial sticks (i.e. vigongo za makoma) while the word vigango refers specifically to memorial sculptures for luvoo elders. Memorials are never called vigongo za vigango. Throughout the thesis, therefore, the words mikoma will be used to refer specifically to memorial sticks for non-status ancestors. The words mikoma and makoma, however, should not be confused. Makoma refers to ancestral spirits. The plural prefixes mi and ma refer to inanimate and animate things respectively. The singular koma is the same whether one is talking about an ancestor or a memorial stick: koma (ancestor) means the spirit, i.e. the non-material component of a person that survives death, in particular married people with children. Where in this thesis there is any ambiguity as to whether koma is referring to an ancestor or to his or her memorial, the word 'stick' will follow (i.e. koma stick).

The making and installation of mikoma is said to take place when (1) the spirits of ancestors appear in dreams to their male descendants; (2) misfortunes strike a family and the family is advised by a muganga to erect memorials; (3) old memorials begin to lean over or are destroyed by fire, termites, etc.; (4) a family moves to a new home site, leaving behind the original memorials; (5) when vigango for luvoo ancestors are installed. Mikoma installed at this time are usually referred to as the 'little ones' of luvoo ancestors; these include their wives.

In practice the usual reason for installing memorials is when a misfortune strikes a family, during which time the senior descendant (usually the son or grandson) consults a muganga to establish the cause of the misfortune. The first question a

muganga is likely to ask the man whether he has installed memorials for deceased relatives; if the answer is in the negative he will be advised to do so immediately and he will be told that the reason for the misfortune is because he has neglected to 'bring home' his ancestors.

Family members (both male and female) may also be 'visited' in dreams by ancestors who are said to come to 'claim' their rightful place in the home compound. When such spirit visitations occur, the senior descendant commissions a ritual elder (of the luvoo status) to make and install the relevant memorials. If a family, which has been the recipient of spirit visitation, fails to put up memorials, the misfortunes will continue and may even be calamitous. People explained that calamities are viewed as possibly stemming from an ancestor's anger and unhappiness, because they feel abandoned; these ancestors are said to complain (in dreams) of being 'left out in the cold' without shelter or clothing. Some people said that sometimes ancestors are unhappy because they were not given a proper burial or 'remembrance' feast. For this reason they will express their unhappiness by bringing some misfortunes to their descendants. However, it is said that unlike malevolent spirits (mapepo), ancestors are usually benign, though they can be capricious at times.

If a family is unable to host an installation ceremony immediately, the senior descendant takes a mixture of millet and maize flour and scatters it here and there, and around the home, and explains to his ancestors the reasons for his inability to hold the ceremony, and promises that as soon as he is in a position to do so, he will bring them home. He begs his ancestors to be kind to him and to his family.

When any of the above conditions necessitates the installation of memorials, the senior descendant commissions an elder of the luvoo association to come and make and put up the memorials, and conduct all the appropriate rituals. If the descendant is himself a member of the luvoo institution, he will make and install the memorials. According to elders, the making of memorial sticks must be undertaken by luvoo elders. However they said that if there are no luvoo elders present, and if the family has searched near and far and not found them, then the most senior elder of the home may, as

a last resort, make them himself.

The installation last three days. On the evening of the first day, an elder of the luvoo (there may be several elders who work together) goes to the woods and cuts suitable branches of wood of an appropriate tree such as the mukone (or mkone), kitadzi, muhumba and muhinga. Mukone is commonly used for female ancestors, while the other types of wood are used for the males. However, in the absence of some of the trees, any of the others can be used. The elder begins by blessing the ancestors by scattering millet flour about. He then cuts the branches to a size somewhere between one and three inches thick and at least twelve inches in length. These branches are not shaped in any way; the top section may be cut level, or may be left slightly pointed. The bark is never scraped off. Having cut the pieces of wood, the elder brings the pieces of wood to a bush near the home and lays them in sleeping position. This stage of the ceremony is referred to as kulalia ('to lay down'; 'to be laid down'). They are left here for the night. The Mijikenda say that it is at this stage that the spirits of the ancestors become like sleeping people. Ritual elders do not sleep indoors that night, but sleep outside (it is possible that there is an underlying implication that they are keeping the ancestors company). At cock-crow on the second day the pieces of wood are brought to the site where they are to be installed (kukutia) within the compound of the home. The 'graves' will have been previously dug (during the late afternoon of the previous day) by the officiating elder. The memorials are placed upright in the holes (referred to as 'graves') and earth is packed around them. They are then dressed in strips of brand new red, black (or blue) and white cloth. These are colours traditionally worn by elders. The most frequent arrangement of coloured cloth on the mikoma is for a strip of white to be tied about one third of the way down from the top of the post, to represent the neck, and below this a strip of red and then a strip of black (or blue) to represent the waist. In the case of mikoma for deceased women a small white skirt, representing the marriage skirt, hando, is tied just below the black (blue) strip. Sometimes, however, red and white strips are tied at both neck and waist. Sometimes mikoma for deceased women just have the red and black (blue) strips at the waist above the skirt.

When all the memorials have been dressed, a shelter is constructed over them. Coconut shells are cut in half and embedded into the ground in front of each of the senior ancestors. A goat is then slaughtered right by the memorials so that the blood splashes onto them, and flows into the ground - all other animals to be consumed at the feast on the third day will also be slaughtered here. No one other than the officiating elder (and other ritual elders present) is allowed near the 'gravesite' until all the rituals have been done. (Some informants said that people may watch mikoma being installed, but never vigango). This stage of the ceremony is referred to as kuramuka (literally, 'to wake up' or 'to awaken'). It is also called kukutia ('to install'). This is the point at which it is said the ancestors join the community as living people and are thereafter referred to as living people.

On the third day, called kwisa ('to finish') animals for the feast are slaughtered beside the mikoma. Before the feasting begins, offerings are made to the spirits of the ancestors and appropriate prayers are said. The officiating elder takes seven pieces of meat and seven lumps of cooked maize meal and divides them and puts them into the coconut shells. He pours some palm wine and water (for those who do not drink) into shells, and says such words as 'Alright, our companions, come and eat. Here is food for you. Here is palm wine and water which you used to drink in your youth. Today we are all here rejoicing with you. We have clothed you and given you a good house. Be kind to us'. As the elder speaks, he puts a bit of the meat and cooked maize meal in front of all the memorials. He reminds them that they have now been brought in from the cold; new clothes have been given to them; a good house has been built to shelter them from the sun and the rain; and now a feast with music and dance, is being held to welcome them home.

When all the appropriate prayers have been said, the officiating elder and his companions retire to a private place where they consume the sacrificial goat. They are given palm wine in appreciation of the work they have done. The feasting proper then begins and continues until late evening. Music and dances, which are said to have been the favourite ones of the ancestors, are performed.

The significance of the number of pieces of meat and cooked maize meal is not clear. People said that this is a custom (ada)



from a long time ago which must be observed. According to Parkin (1982, 10) seven local children will eat the seven pieces of maize-meal which must not otherwise be eaten by married persons. He states that 'to do so will destroy the relationship of the spirits to the sticks, i.e. destroy them as "persons" '. The women present according to Parkin, will add salt to the meat which is subsequently eaten by all present. Parkin says that the underlying theme is that 'the new spirit, in refusing to eat the meat, has finally renounced the mortal flesh or meat that once covered him or her and has taken on the new body of wood offered him and, through his acceptance of life-giving blood and his association with young children, has been bodily re-born' (ibid). When I interviewed the Mijikenda, no one mentioned the incorporation of children in any of these rituals, but they did stress, frequently, that the use of certain things, such as cloth, and decorations on vigango for instance, represent the 'youthfulness' of the spirits.

No memorials are erected for children. An elder explained that only married people have memorials installed for them. He also explained that deceased children and unmarried adults cannot appear in dreams to anyone. He said 'who will the child appear in dreams to and the person he would appear to is the wife, and he has no wife! He cannot come in dreams'.

In practically all the homes I visited, mikoma has been erected because of family misfortune or because a family had moved home. In the cases where misfortunes had struck, or a family had experienced repeated bad luck, the head of the home had invariably consulted a muganga to establish the root cause of the affliction and in all instances the muganga had advised the installation of memorials. The son, or grandson, is the person usually obliged to undertake the commissioning of memorials (descent is usually not reckoned back further than the great-grandparents). The deceased divined as the cause of affliction are invariably male. Memorials for female ancestors are put up because they are the wives of the deceased demanding commemoration. Thus, when a memorial is put up for a man, his deceased wives are commemorated at the same time. According to one informant, sometimes stone memorials are put up for those ancestors who cannot be remembered by name; another informant (an agricultural officer) explained that this is like

putting up a memorial for the 'unknown soldier'.

The descriptions of memorial installation thus far have been for Mijikenda patrilineal groups. The matrilineal groups (Duruma, Rabai and Digo) do not install vigango, i.e. the decorated sculptures. Further research is needed to answer these particular questions.

Among the patrilineal groups, the installation of memorials does not follow a strict pattern. Though people said that it was the son or grandson who installs memorials (i.e. commissions their installation), it often happens that the head of the home - the person who has inherited the title and is the guardian of his brother's children, and who has inherited his brother's wives - will install memorials for his deceased great-grandparents, his grandparents, his parents, his married brothers, and if he has married children, these as well. However, it appears that if his own wives have died, he will not commemorate them; they will be commemorated at the time his own commemoration takes place. Any male descendant from a particular home which has a more senior descendant who holds the title of mwenye mudzi ('owner of the home', i.e. he is the person responsible for all matters connected with the family members, and the family's property, etc.), will, when he establishes his own home and is then head of his own household, erect memorials to all the above-mentioned people and anyone else within the family lineage. However, because he does not hold the title of mwenye mudzi, he must consult the mwenye mudzi and request him to commission the installation of memorials. This practice, however, is not so common, because Mijikenda domestic groups invariably live within the same compound where the mwenye mudzi resides. Where it is common, it is because people have moved away from the close-knit groups and have established their homes some distance away, and in some cases far away. No matter how far away the group is from the mwenye mudzi, 'authority' still lies with him.

(i) Actual Cases

(a) Charo wa Dida

Charo wa Dida, a Kauma aged about fifty, lives in Timboni (Shariani) with four of his seven children and his two wives (one a Kauma and the other a Rabai). He is a cargo handler at the Kilindini Harbour in Mombasa, approximately 40 kilometres away. On the 29th October 1983, Charo had 14 koma sticks installed at his home because of frequent bad luck which had plagued him for some time. He explained that the bad luck had ruined his crops, killed off his livestock, caused terrible sickness in his family, brought an invasion of 'safari' ants (vicious ants which are destructive), and affected his job which he almost lost. In desperation, and believing that he had been bewitched, he consulted a muganga. The muganga assured him that he was not a victim of 'evil medicine' (uchawi), but that the problem was that he had neglected his ancestors and had left them out in the cold. He was advised to seek an elder of the luvoo to come and install memorials for the ancestors. In addition he was to acquire two he-goats, one pure black (muiru) and one spotted (miri-miri) to be used at the ceremony. Charo did accordingly and commissioned an elder named Pande wa Mwarabu to officiate at the ceremony.

The days from the 27th to the 29th October 1983 were regarded as propitious and the ceremony began on the evening of the 27th. Pande wa Mwarabu took with him a mixture of millet (wimbi) and sorghum (mtama) flour to the bush where the branches of the mukone tree were cut for the female ancestors and branches of the muhumba and kitadzi for the male ancestors. He scattered the flour here and there and said prayers before he cut the branches. He cut fourteen pieces of wood that were required to be left in the bush over night. On the evening of the 28th Pande brought them close to the compound, but still remaining in the bush, and he laid them in the kulalia position. At cock-crow on the 29th the memorials were installed, and after all the rituals had been carried out, the feasting began on the third day.

According to Charo, once he had brought his ancestors home his misfortunes ceased, and since then he has reaped good harvests; he has had no problems with his livestock, and his family has not

experienced any more illness. His own job has become very secure. Charo pointed out proudly that one of the koma sticks had even started to sprout a green leaf, a sure sign that the spirits were happy and contented.

The deceased represented by the 14 posts included Charo's grandfather, his grandfather's two wives, his own father and mother, and his elder brother, and seven members of his family (Plates: 89, 90,91).

(b) Karisa wa Fondo

In contrast to Charo's neatly kept koma sticks and neatly kept shelter, his immediate neighbour, Karisa wa Fondo, has allowed his memorial sticks and shelter to become dilapidated. In fact, the whole structure has partially collapsed and some of the memorial sticks have rotted away. When I asked Karisa whether his ancestors were not unhappy, he explained that he did not have the means to hold another installation feast. The impression I got was that Karisa was quite nonchalant about them, and that the ancestors had become irrelevant, at least for the time being. The family seemed reasonably happy and content. It is likely that if a misfortune did strike Karisa, he would immediately erect memorials (Plates: 92,93).

(c) Chizi Kombe

Chizi Kombe is a Duruma woman married to a Giriama. Chizi and her family moved from their original home in Mariakani to Shariani in 1948, because of Chizi's ill-health. Some ten years ago, Chizi's husband commissioned memorials to be installed at their present home. Some of the memorials represent vigango which were installed in the kaya many years ago; these replicas are called vibao (sing. kibao). They are much smaller in height and width than vigango and they are never decorated, but are the same shape as vigango. Of the twelve memorials installed only two vibao are still standing. Chizi explained that all the others have since rotted or been eaten by termites. According to her, new ones have not been installed because her co-wife has become a Christian and no longer believes in such things, and therefore refuses to have them installed. Chizi said that for this reason the livestock has been dying and will continue to die because the ancestors are unhappy.

(d) Kingi Masha

Kingi Masha is a Giriama Muslim. In his compound is one kibao, representing his grandfather, Maitha Minyazi, who was a luvoo elder. His original memorial, a kigango, was erected in the kaya. Kingi explained that there has been a memorial for Maitha's wife, but that it has since fallen down. Though the remaining memorial is leaning over, and practically covered by sand, Kingi said that it would be very wrong to prop it up; to do so is to anger the ancestor. A new memorial must be made and an installation feast must be held. According to Kingi, only his father's brother, who is the senior head of the home, can commission the making and installation of them. Kingi said that he himself would be unable to put up these memorials because he has not attained the ritual age, and also because he is a Muslim and no longer believes in these traditions.

(e) Mwanjale Nduria

Mwanjale Nduria is a muganga living in Shariani. Though Mwanjale allowed me to sit and watch some of his therapy sessions, he was reluctant to be interviewed (when I returned to Shariani in 1985, one muganga informed me that Mwanjale was suspected of practising uchawi). The memorials at the home of Mwanjale are preserved in a big house where Mwanjale himself sleeps, and where the men may sit and converse over their palm wine. There are a total of seventeen memorials. Four of them are vibao (replicas of vigango). The rest are mikoma (Plates: 97,98). According to Mwanjale, some of the memorials were put up before 1962, and others were erected about five years ago.

(f) Mulai wa Kabao

A few minutes walk from the Shariani trading centre, lives Mulai wa Kabao, a luvoo elder aged over seventy-five years. There is another luvoo elder in Shariani by the name of Charo wa Mbita. These two elders are regarded as the leading experts in ritual matters. Mulai is well-known as a maker of memorials, while Charo is a well-known ironsmith. Mulai has made and supervised the installation of a comparatively large number of memorials for himself and for others, some of whom are related to him. The most

recent commission he undertook was in 1984.

In Mulai's compound are memorials which represent some of his ancestors. He made and installed a group of memorials representing his father's relatives about seven years ago (Plates: 94,95,96; Figs. 33,34). In this group are two vibao which represent his grandfather and his father, both of whom were luvoo elders. The original kigango representing his grandfather was installed in the kaya, and that for his father was put up in Mulai's original home, not very far from his present home. About four years ago he made and installed a second group representing his mother's relatives (Fig. 35). This second group is referred to as 'guests' from another village. The group is set up some paces away from the main group because, according to Mulai, they do not belong to his father's lineage. One memorial in this second group is a kibao representing Menza wa Tuva who was a luvoo elder.

Mulai named the ancestors represented by the mikoma and the vibao as follows:

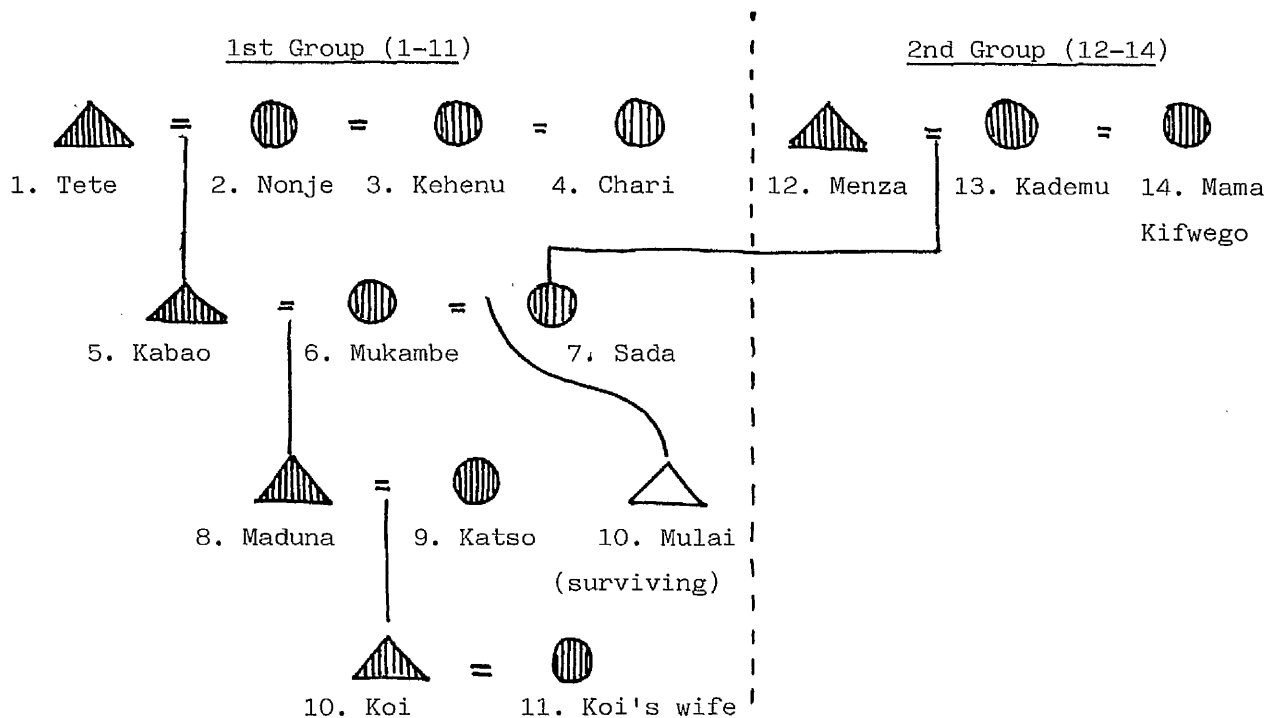
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Tete wa Koi<br>(Mulai's grandfather)                        | He died during the famine called <u>Magunia</u> (sacks) which occurred in 1889-1900: named after the burlap sacks (i.e. gunny bags) of grain brought in to help the victims. |
| 2. Nonje<br>(Tete's first wife)                                | Tete's wives died during a famine called   |
| 3. Kehenu<br>(Tete's second wife)                              | <u>Ndzala ya Pishi Rupia</u> ('Hunger of the Rupee Bridewealth'): named after the  |
| 4. Chari<br>(Tete's third wife)                                | period when rupees were used to pay bridewealth.   |
| 5. Kabao wa Tete<br>(son of Nonje and Tete:<br>Mulai's father) | Died as a very old man ten years ago.  |
| 6. Mukambe<br>(Kabao's first wife)                             | Died before her husband.   |
| 7. Sada<br>(Kabao's wife:<br>Mulai's mother)                   | Died after her husband.  |

8. Maduna wa Tete  
(son of Kabao and Mukambe)
9. Katso  
(Maduna's wife)
10. Koi wa Tete  
(son of Maduna and Katso)
11. Wife of Koi  
(Mulai could not remember her name at that moment.)

Second group

12. Menza wa Tuva  
(Sada's father: Mulai's mother's father)
13. Kademu  
(Menza's wife: Sada's mother)
14. Mama Kifwego  
(Menza's second wife)

The relationship can be shown diagrammatically as follows:

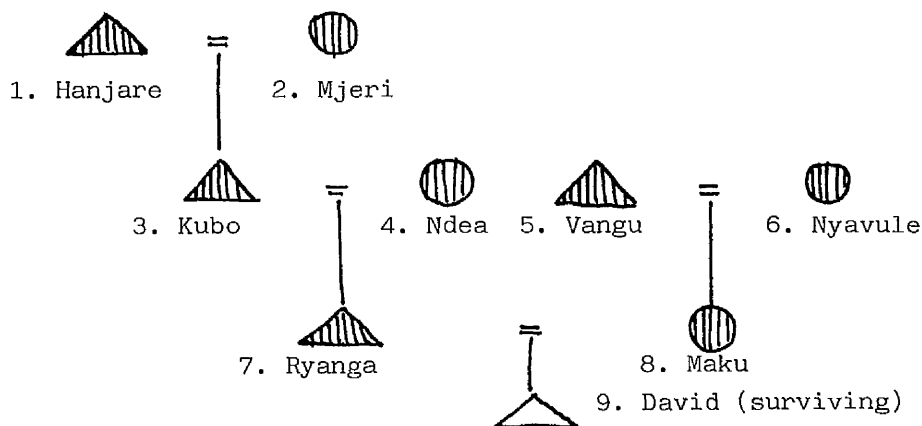


(g) David Malemba Ryanga

Approximately 80 kilometres from Shariani, via Mombasa, lives David Malemba Ryanga, a former school teacher. In his compound are memorials which were put up several years ago. The memorials are sheltered under a simple structure thatched with palm leaves. There is a stone memorial which David described as belonging to yule mzee wa zamani asiye julikana ('that unknown elder of long ago', i.e. that elder that cannot be remembered). The stone represents any forgotten elder. The eight koma sticks represent the following ancestors:

1. Hanjare wa Mwamutzi  
(David's great-grandfather)
2. Mjeri wa Katana  
(wife of Hanjare)
3. Kubo wa Hanjare  
(David's grandfather)
4. Ndea wa Mumba  
(Kubo's wife)
5. Vangu wa Chea  
(David's mother's father)
6. Nyavule wa Mwatela  
(wife of Vangu)
7. Ryanga wa Kubo  
(son of Kubo and Ndea: David's father)
8. Maku wa Vangu  
(Ryanga's wife: David's mother)

The relationship can be represented diagrammatically as follows:





Chapter Eleven: Ancestral Commemoration - Vigango

The most well-known sculptured artifact of the Mijikenda is the kigango (pl. vigango), the commemorative figure of prominent deceased men.<sup>1</sup> All Mijikenda groups erect memorials (koma, pl. mikoma) for their ancestors, but not all put up vigango. The six patrilineal groups (Giriama, Chonyi, Jibana, Kauma, Kambe and Ribe) install vigango, while the matrilineal Digo and the double unilineal descent groups, Duruma and Rabai, put up only mikoma, of wood or stone. Since all nine groups developed more or less the same social, ritual, economic and political institutions, it is difficult to explain why the Digo, Duruma and Rabai do not install vigango. The reason may lie in the particular type of inheritance system of the different groups, and may even lie in their origins. According to Spear,<sup>2</sup> though the Duruma and Rabai have been fully assimilated into the Mijikenda group as a whole, in fact they do not share the same traditions of origins. The Rabai are said to have originally migrated from Rombo in Chagga, Tanzania, while the Duruma have no single tradition of origin and say they were formed of three groups of people who came together in the Duruma area; later they adopted Mijikenda traditions.<sup>3</sup> The Digo do share the same origins as the patrilineal groups, but were the first of the Mijikenda to migrate to the Kenyan coast from the lower Juba River. The Duruma and Rabai had the luvoo institution, identified elsewhere with the kigango; the Digo do not appear to have had this association. Research will have to be carried out specifically to answer this question. However, it can be tentatively suggested that the installation of vigango appears to be linked to the inheritance systems. Vigango are exclusively connected with men who claim their rights (after death) in the compounds of their sons or grandsons. These memorials, therefore, can only be put up for married men, of the luvoo association, with direct descendants.

Before describing the various stages leading to the installation of vigango it is worth explaining the use of two terms of particular importance in connection with vigango. These are the words luvoo and gohu. Gohu refers both to a member of the Gohu club or to the club itself. Among the Kambe, Kauma and Ribe, the word was used for the leading members of the kambi, the Council of Elders. The term

luvoo refers to a member of the Gohu association; to the association itself; to the buffalo horn bracelet signifying the association; and more importantly it refers to the 'purified' or 'blessed' status of an elder within this exclusive institution. The Mijikenda themselves use the terms interchangeably, but appear to prefer luvoo (the majority of people I interviewed used the word luvoo, except among the Kambe who alone used gohu more frequently). In describing or talking of the kigango, people used the terms wenye luvoo ('owners of the luvoo' or 'members of the luvoo') and wale walitaswa ('those who were "purified"/"blessed"', or simply the 'purified' or 'blessed' ones). Among the Mijikenda, vigango are never described as simply inanimate objects, but as living persons.<sup>4</sup>

(i) On Becoming Luvoo

In order to qualify for a kigango after death, an elder must have been a member of the prestigious association called luvoo or gohu. Initiation in this club required a man to be substantially well-off since the fee was exorbitant. From all the interviews conducted in 1984 and 1985, and from available literature, it is clear that all men wishing to belong to the club had to have reached the senior-most rank within the hierarchy of the Council of Elders; this rank was the kambi mbere. Elders wishing to become luvoo made their intentions known to the leading members of the association by first offering a small payment consisting of palm wine and a fowl. When they had been initially accepted, they were informed about the requisite fee and told the date on which to pay it. Candidates were initiated as a group; there is no evidence that a ceremony could be held for a single member. Propitious periods were chosen at which time initiation took place.

According to David Malemba Ryanga of Kambe, the fee was called mahendo<sup>5</sup> ('palm wine for an act, a deed').<sup>6</sup> The fee has been sometimes explained as a form of bridewealth.<sup>7</sup> David Malemba explained that the fee consisted of two portions. The first was an introductory fee which was made up of palm wine, a fowl and one reale<sup>8</sup> (reale appears to have been a Portuguese coin equivalent to a dollar: the reale was later replaced by other coins in use in a particular period). This stage was referred to as kushika mkono

('to hold the hand'). The next portion was a high fee consisting of three cows, or one cow and money equivalent to the value of one big cow and one small one, and in addition produce from the farms of each of the candidate's brothers. In the early 1900s it was reported that among the Duruma part of the cost to become luvoo was one bullock, one goat and palm wine.<sup>9</sup> In 1914 it was noted that among the Giriama the fee for gohu (luvoo) was one bullock, fourteen calabashes of palm wine, four dishes of maize meal, six coils of tobacco and thirty measures of castor-oil seeds (at that time one measure was one pishi which was equivalent to about six pounds).<sup>10</sup> When the payment, mahendo, had been made, a date was fixed for the start of the rites which took place in the central kaya (these ceremonies and rites no longer exist).

Having paid their fee, the candidates were assembled in the kaya and put through strenuous tests and given training in esoteric knowledge. The rituals were conducted in strict secrecy in the forests of the kaya. It appears that the rites lasted seven days. The most important stage of the candidates' acceptance into the luvoo association as full-fledged members was the 'blessing' or 'purification' stage, which was marked by a dance called the nyambura; the name also referred to the feast consumed after the candidates had been vested with the luvoo bracelet denoting their new status. The 'blessing' or 'purification' rites represented the elevation of an elder to the honorific luvoo institution. The crowning honours relating to this ceremony were called thura,<sup>11</sup> a word meaning 'the elevation' of candidates from one stage to another. The word commonly used to refer to this 'blessing'/'purification' is kutaswa (used by elders). This word appears to be now obsolete, but exists in some very old Swahili dialects and means 'to purify'.<sup>12</sup> Younger Mijikenda use the word kuhasa ('to bless'). The other words used are kueza ('to purify'; 'to hoist'; 'to put up'; 'to elevate').<sup>13</sup> The blessing or purification rites involved the use of castor-oil and the wearing of certain coloured cloths as described below.

After the completion of the ritual education, the candidates were prepared to dance the nyambura. Their bodies were smeared with red ochre (wrongly described in some literature as 'clay') on top of which black and white patterns were painted. According to David Malemba, the patterns were printed on with stamps made from the

midribs of castor-oil leaves, which gave an impression of lines radiating from the centre (and from a distance looked like flowers). Informants said that these patterns represented the 'youthfulness' (uvulana) of the men being initiated. On the heads of the initiates were moulded crowns of millet paste (again wrongly described as 'clay') which were decorated with red ochre and black and white colours. The crowns were conical in shape and stood about a foot high. Pieces of palm leaf were cut to resemble feathers and these were stuck into the crowns (sometimes pieces of wood were frayed to resemble 'flowers' and used in place of palm leaves). The men were dressed in palm leaf skirts (made by old women from the mukindu palm) in the same style as the women's marriage skirts, mahando, tied at the waist with red and white sashes, signifying their membership in the luvoo association. It seems that the kitambi cloth (black in colour) was worn under the skirt. The men wore borassus palm nut rattles (njuga) tied round their ankles. At some point in the dance, the men were drenched with castor-oil (mbono) and ritually 'purified' or 'blessed'.

The ultimate stage of the 'purification' or 'blessing' ritual was the investiture of the initiates with the luvoo bracelet, representing their new status. The ceremony took place in the central section of the kaya and was witnessed by relatives and clansmen. The initiates were led in procession by an elder to the place of ceremony in a single file and under cover of a huge sheet called lidegwani. Walking very slowly and solemnly in the manner of a funeral procession, they were then led round the perimeter of the kaya and finally to the place of ceremony. When the sheet of cloth was removed the men were seen to be 'wearing beautiful clothes made with fibre'. The women danced and sang, ululating joyfully because their husbands ('little human beings') were to be elevated to the luvoo association.<sup>14</sup> Each man was then called out and invested with the buffalo horn bracelet (luvoo) worn below the elbow. As they were each called out, they were called by new names, chosen according to their outstanding qualities. Some candidates chose Arab names like 'Liwali' and 'Haji', for example.<sup>15</sup> After this, the nyambura feast was eaten. The relatives supplied palm wine and food for the feast. Junior members of the luvoo association had gone to the farms of the brothers of the candidates

and had collected produce for the feast. The women had ground flour and brought it to the place of ceremony. The officiating elders consumed some of the animals contributed as fees, while the rest of the gathering ate animals provided by the candidates and their clansmen. The luvoo rituals had to take place during a good year when there was a plentiful supply of food for the nyambura feast.

The last rite performed by the new luvoo members was the sliding of their bracelets to above their elbows. This was said to be done during sexual intercourse with their wives when, during climax, the wife had to push the bracelet from below the elbow to above it.<sup>16</sup> This act was done on the same day of the investiture and signified the virility of the initiates. Once this act had been carried out, the initiate became a full-fledged luvoo.

Membership into the luvoo association entitled the elders to wear certain coloured cloths. The black cloth kitambi (kitsambi/kidsambi), demonstrated that the elders had successfully passed the initiation rites. A red sash, mkumbuu ya ngundu, and a white sash, mkumbuu ya nieruve, signified the respect and honour (ishima) attached to the status of a luvoo.<sup>17</sup>

The buffalo bracelet was the most significant artifact of the association. This undecorated bracelet (Plates: 99,100) embodied all the attributes pertaining to the status of luvoo. There is an underlying implication that the ferocity of the buffalo (one of the most dangerous animals in the wilds) is somehow analogous to luvoo elders. Thus, when people talk of the bracelet they do so with respect because it is not the object they are describing but the 'purified'/'blessed' status of the wearers (Plates: 99,100). According to David Malemba Ryanga it was forbidden for a younger brother (born of the same mother) to become a luvoo holder before his elder brother. To do so was to commit a serious offence which would result in the elder brother becoming seriously ill. He could only be cured by the stripping of the bracelet from the younger brother who would be required to wear an iron bangle called chitsuvi (kitsuvi). This bangle was magical medicine to prevent further illness in the family. This example serves to highlight the importance of seniority in families, the maintenance of which was important since this ultimately defined inheritance and authority

within a family.

Ivory bracelets, made in three or four sections hinged together with ebony pins, and described in museum records as luvoo bracelets (KNM. 1943, 12,14,15) (Plates: 42,43) are not in fact luvoo bracelets according to luvoo elders interviewed in 1984. According to them this type of bracelet is purely ornamental. In Adamson's book, paintings and photographs of waganga depict them wearing these types of ivory bracelets. It is possible that these bracelets may have been used exclusively by waganga.<sup>19</sup>

(ii) Death of Luvoo

Burial rites for luvoo elders are much more detailed than those for ordinary men and women. Mortuary rites take place in strict secrecy and away from the rest of the community. As soon as a luvoo elder dies his descendant - usually the next head of the home, his son or grandson - quickly informs other luvoo elders to come and perform the burial rites. If the descendant is himself a luvoo member he will undertake the ceremonies unless there is a much older luvoo present, in which case he will help with the rites. Non-luvoo may not perform the burial rites. Luvoo elders assemble and prepare the body in secret. They wash the body with special herbal medicine and then the body and head hair is shaved. After the shaving, millet flour is applied to the head. The body is then decorated with red, white and black patterns, using stamps made from castor-oil leaves. The colours are made from ground red ochre, flour (or chalk) and soot, each bound with animal fat. Three elders do the decorating, each one taking a pot of colour and applying it from the head to the waist (according to some elders this sort of body decoration is no longer done). Once the body has been patterned it is drenched with castor-oil. It is then dressed in brand new cloths relevant to the luvoo status. The kitambi (black) is wrapped round the waist. On top of it are tied a red and white sash. The whole body is then wrapped in a white shroud. The elders performing the rites sing appropriate songs to 'accompany' their companion on his journey. Once the rites have been completed, one of the elders comes out of the house of death and gives a signal for relatives to wail. The wailing is brief and only serves to

indicate that death has taken place. At the same time a sacred drum (friction drum called mwandza), begins to 'wail' in the bush where the grave is being dug by junior members of the luvoo, known as wabora, who are younger in age than the other members. The friction drum is only played when a momentous event occurs (some informants said that this drum is only used when death of the members of the uganga groups, of the Vaya or Fisi, occurs). The sound of the friction drum, which resembles the roar of a lion, or the cry of a hyena (fisi), is said to instil fear in members of the community. It also serves to warn people to keep away from the place where elders are assembled.

The graves of luvoo elders are dug in the woods near their homes. In the past, all deceased luvoo used to be taken back to the kaya for burial in specially designated areas. This practice has since died out and luvoo elders are now buried within close proximity to their homes. Once the grave has been dug out, it is lined on all sides with planks of wood. The bottom is lined with a plaited mat. The body is brought to the grave wrapped in the skin of a freshly slaughtered cow. It is laid in the grave and then a plank of wood is put over it. A plaited mat is laid on top of the plank and then the grave is completely filled with soil. Elders sing and dance round it and on top of it to completely flatten it so that no one will know it is a grave. Animals to be consumed at the funeral feast are slaughtered beside the grave. The grave is referred to by the elders as the home (mudzi) or village (miji) of the deceased.

The funeral feast lasts five days and commences when the officiating elders give permission to the family of the deceased to announce it. The ritual elders take the sacrificial animal, and in addition they are supplied with palm wine and cooked food which they eat by the grave. The rest of the people attending the feast join the family and eat the feast at the home compound, but do not go anywhere near the grave and the ritual elders. As with most rituals, palm wine is essential and must be available in large quantities. The family of the deceased is obliged to give a fitting feast in keeping with the status of luvoo (at one funeral of a luvoo in 1978, 30 bullocks were consumed at the feast).<sup>20</sup> Appropriate songs and dances which used to be enjoyed by the deceased are performed.

(iii) The Production and Installation of Vigango

At death, all spirits of Mijikenda adults go to another world where they are said to wander; and later to inhabit trees and rocks in the forests. After a time these spirits may appear in dreams to their descendants and complain of being neglected, saying that they have been left out in the cold. They demand to be brought home and be given a good shelter, and good clothes. These spirits manifest their anger by causing misfortunes to strike negligent families. The usual response to all this is the installation of memorials. When an ancestor who had become luvoo in his life time appears in a dream to a descendant, he must immediately consult a living luvoo to come and make and install a kigango. The descendant may also consult a muganga if he is not sure of the cause of his troubles. The making and installation of vigango (sing. kigango) can take place in the absence of dreams; families who can afford to commission a kigango and to hold a commemoration feast often do so soon after the death of their luvoo relative.

Unlike mikoma which involves little work in their preparation, vigango take much longer to make and are, therefore, much more expensive; the feast too is bigger.

Memorials are made by ritual elders who have the requisite carving skills. However, if an elder does not possess carving skills he will commission and instruct a carver to make the kigango. As it happens, of all the homes I visited which had memorials, including vigango, without exception all had been made by elders of the luvoo. The kigango is made in the forest, away from the sight of members of the community.

Should anyone inadvertently see a memorial being made, he or she is obliged to pay a fine to the officiating elders. According to some informants, anyone wishing to see a memorial being made can do so by paying the craftsman a token of some sort. However, other informants insisted that it is forbidden to see a kigango being made.

Appropriate trees, possessing long-lasting qualities, are selected and cut down. The most frequently used tree is the muhuhu (*Brachylaena Hutchinsii*) whose wood is durable and termite-resistant. Other trees used are the mwanga, or mwangati (*Terminalia Brevipes*), Mufada, mng'ambo, and mdungu. Elders said that the qualities of the



wood are linked to the venerable age and stature of luvoo elders (cf. Parkin 1982, 15). The length of time it takes to carve a kigango depends on a sculptor's skill. According to Mulai wa Kabao (a luvoo elder), a skilled sculptor can shape the memorial in four or five days and will take at least another week to carve the decorations. For the duration of the work the sculptor is supplied daily by the family commissioning him with one kadzama of palm wine (equivalent to about twelve whiskey bottles), a wooden bowl of cooked maize meal and a chicken to accompany it.

A kigango is a long narrow plank of wood carved in order to distinguish between the head, neck, torso and waist. The lower section of the kigango is buried in the ground. The sculptor uses an axe (tsoka), an adze (tezo), a chisel (temo) and a knife (kisu). The head of the kigango may be flat and round, flat and square, or modelled into a naturalistic form (Plates: 110, 120-127; Figs. 42, 43). The features can be well-defined, no more than a mere suggestion of eyes, nose and mouth, or totally featureless (Figs. 36-40). Sometimes the eyes are composed of a series of incised triangles (Figs. 38, 41). The torso is embellished with incised triangular motifs arranged in various ways to give different effects. In most vigango the patterns usually run down the sides of the torso; in some cases the whole torso may be carved in a mass of patterns, but this is very rare and appears only in some very old vigango. In some vigango zig-zag and curved lines are used (Fig. 41). The nipples and umbilical cord are often represented by incised triangles arranged in a circular manner (Fig. 41). The height of the kigango more or less corresponds to the average height of a Mijikenda person. The average dimensions would be something like 5ft x 5ins x 2ins deep. Some vigango are exceptionally tall being almost 8ft (Plate: 112). Very few vigango ever exceed ten inches in width. When the kigango is ready its body is smeared with red ochre and the incisions are filled with black and white. The red is made from red ochre finely ground; black is from soot or ground charcoal; and white is made from white wash or flour. The substances are bound with euphorbia latex (sometimes with animal fat) which hardens into a clear consistency and preserves the colours.

Some elders said that vigango carved without facial features indicate that the luvoo elders commemorated died of small-pox (ndui). The bodies of these vigango often have little patterning of them also.

It is normal that the short memorial posts (mikoma) for non-luvoo ancestors are made at the same time as the vigango. These mikoma also represent ancestors who have not yet been brought home. If the wives of the luvoo have also died, mikoma will be put up for them at the same time as those for their husbands.

Once all the memorials are ready, elders fetch them from the forest and bring them to a bush close to the home compound where they are to be installed. The elders do this in the evening, carrying the memorials as if carrying corpses, that is, in a horizontal position. A kigango is carried across the shoulders of the elders in a most respectful manner. The memorials are never dragged along the ground; this is likened to mistreatment of a human corpse. The memorials are carefully laid down in what is termed the kulalia position ('to be laid down'; 'to be put to sleep'). This stage is explained as being the point at which the spirits of the deceased claimants enter the memorials and become as sleeping people. Elders of the luvoo sleep outside in the open on plaited mats close to the grave in the compound. They are supplied with four calabashes (kadzama) of palm wine. Two of these containers are referred to as tembo la kulalia ('palm wine for the laying down'). The other two containers are called tembo la kukitia ('palm wine for the installation'). At cock-crow the next morning, the elders go and fetch 'their people' (watu wao) and bring them to the grave. The memorials are covered with a cloth and no one, other than the luvoo elders, may see them. In any case, people are still asleep while this is going on. The 'graves' will already have been prepared the afternoon before. They are sprinkled with millet flour and then the memorials are buried. Soil is packed tightly round them to stand them firmly upright. Once they have been erected the memorials are clothed in brand new cloths. Memorials for female ancestors are dressed by a woman who is of the correct ritual age, referred to as the mbono (castor-oil) age. These women are usually the wives of luvoo elders who belong to their own special group. The strips of cloth are tied at the neck and the waist. The colours used are red, black (or blue) and white.

As I have already said in the previous chapter, the most frequent arrangement of coloured cloth on the mikoma is for a strip of white to be tied perhaps about one third of the way down from

the top of the post, to represent the neck, and below this a strip of red and then a strip of black (or blue) to represent the waist. In the case of a mikoma for deceased women a small white skirt, representing the marriage skirt, hando, is tied just below the black strip. Sometimes, however, red and white strips are tied at both the neck and waist. Sometimes mikoma for deceased women just have red and black strips at the waist above the skirt (Plate: 9; Fig. 34).

The arrangement of coloured cloth on the kigango is usually more specific. A black strip, representing the kitambi, is tied at the waist. A red strip, signifying the mukumbuu ya ngundu (red sash) is tied above the black, and above it is tied a white strip, representing the white sash worn in conjunction with the red. At the neck is tied another red strip above which is tied a white strip, this time representing the normal day-to-day garments of an elder.

The patterns and colours on a kigango are said to delight the ancestor, to make him happy (kufurahisha). The spirit will find great pleasure (raha) in its new body, the kigango. As a result of this happiness the spirit will in turn be generous and benevolent and relatives of the contented ancestor will be 'fanned by a good breeze' and will reap good harvests. The meaning of kigango is something to appease or charm the spirits with and comes from the root word ganga, meaning cure, heal, charm, appease. The patterns are said by the elders to imitate those put on initiates during their entry into the luvoo association. According to other informants the patterns represent those cicatrized on the elders' bodies. Cicatrization is more permanent because patterns are cut into the skin and treated with certain medicine to create weals.

The Mijikenda said that a 'real' kigango cannot be destroyed by fire. All informants stressed this point, and said that even if everything else is destroyed, the kigango will be left standing. The woods used are also termite-resistant.

(iv) Installation of Replicas

The installation of replica memorials called vibao (sing. kibao) takes place when a family moves home as vigango (and mikoma) cannot be moved, or when the original memorials begin to lean over or are destroyed. A family moving home will not uproot the original figures because this is seen as a desecration; it would be like exhuming a corpse. Replicas are, therefore, installed at the new home.

Several families in Kilifi District where I conducted research said that the vibao in their compounds were erected to replace vigango left behind in the kaya, or at the original home.

Vibao have the same shape as vigango, but they are much smaller, usually standing about three feet above the ground though they can be as short as two feet. Vibao are never decorated, nor do they have any indication of features. The only form of decoration are the strips of red, black (or blue) and white strips of cloth tied around them. Sometimes the bodies are smeared with red ochre (Figs. 33-34).

No information could be elicited as to why vibao are never decorated than that this is how vibao are; that it is the custom (ada) started by their great-grandparents. It is intended as no more than a replica of the original. The basic shape provided on the new body is sufficient to achieve identity with the original form. The rites and festivities for installing vibao are the same as for vigango.

Once the kigango and mikoma have been clothed they are drenched with castor-oil. This conjunction of red, black and white cloths with castor-oil seems to figure in every ritual/ceremonial context at which a person is purified in the process of transition from one status to another, for example when a man becomes luvoo. All the various stages of the installation are the same as those described in the previous chapter, and bear the same names.

According to the elders, a commemoration feast is meant to be enjoyed. They said that this is a time to be happy because their companions have come back to enjoy life with them. One elder of the luvoo explained that being a member of the luvoo entitles one 'to eat and be happy'. Membership also entitles one to attend any functions anywhere in Mijikenda communities and to eat any sacrificial animals offered at the ceremonies/rituals.

(v) Local Understanding of the Significance of Kigango Form and Patterns

The kigango, in contrast to the simple koma post, is perceived as representing all the attributes pertaining to a luvoo elder. The real essence of a kigango is that it is perceived as a living person, a mwenye luvoo ('owner of the luvoo bracelet'). In the form are combined the elder's human state as defined by shape, height, width, face, neck and waist; the 'youthfulness' (uvulana) of the newly-initiated luvoo expressed through the decorative patterns; and his 'purified' or 'blessed' status expressed by the use of castor-oil and white, red and black pigments on the body of the kigango, together with the strips of cloth. The Mijikenda say quite clearly that the kigango is not meant to be a true likeness of the deceased; but the form is quite clearly meant to imitate (kudziagiza) or represent a human being.

The facial features of a kigango are explained as indicating that this was a living person, which reinforces the significance of its essential shape. Featureless vigango, as explained earlier, are said to indicate that the person died from small-pox. A well-made kigango is said to demonstrate a sculptor's carving skill. Informants said that a sculptor should be able to carve decorations on a kigango and if he cannot, then his carving skills will be questioned. According to Mulai wa Kabao (a luvoo and maker of memorials) 'if he fails to make patterns (urembo) then what sort of work has he done, this craftsman?'.

(a) Three Specific Cases

Karisa wa Katana who lives approximately 5 kilometres from Matsangoni trading centre, a place about 50 kilometres from Shariani, has three vigango and three vibao in one of his maize fields, the site where his original home used to be. Karisa said that the memorials were erected over thirty-five years ago by his father's brother called Ngolo wa Ngala. The three vibao represent those left behind in the kaya. The luvoo ancestors represented by the vigango in the maizefield are Kalama wa Ngona, Fondo wa Ngona and Wale wa Ngona. Karisa refused to give me more details about the ancestors represented, but did tell me that there used to be

mikoma for three women, Katso, Kadzunda and Sada ya Kombe, but these have since rotted away. According to Katana the memorials took over a month to make (Plates: 101-110).

A further example is provided by an elder of luvoo, called Nzaro Gushalo (over 80 years old) who said that kigango in his compound was installed about six years ago. It represented his father, Chai wa Nzaro, who came from Weruni and died in Matsangoni. Nzaro said that it was carved by Koi wa Bwai of Tezo. He knew of another vigango carver who lives in Matsangoni called Kwai Mamure.

Mulai wa Kabao and Mwanjale Nduria also have vibao in their compounds; these were discussed in the previous chapter.

FOOTNOTES

1. G. New, Life, Wanderings and Labour in Eastern Africa, 1873, p.101; W. Fitzgerald, Travels in the Coastlands of British East Africa and the Islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, 1898, p.104; A. Hollis, 'Notes on the Graves of the Wa-Nyika', Man, 85, 1909, p.145; W.E.H. Barrett, 'Notes on the Customs and Beliefs of the Wa-Giriama, etc, British East Africa', JRAI, 14, 1911, pp.20-39; A. Champion, The Agiryama of Kenya, 1967, pp.24-25; A. Werner, 'The Bantu Coast Tribes of the East African Protectorate', JRAI, 45, 1915, pp.326; J. Adamson, The Peoples of Kenya, 1967, pp.285-312; J. Brown, 'Traditional Sculpture in Kenya', AA, VI, 1, 1972, pp.16-20, 58 and 'Mijikenda Grave and Memorial Sculpture', AA, XIII, 4, 1980, pp.36-39,88; D. Parkin, Speaking of Art: A Giriama Impression, 1982; E. Wolfe, An Introduction to the Arts of Kenya, 1979, p.24-35; Parkin, Sieber and Wolfe, Vigango: Commemorative Sculpture of the Mijikenda of Kenya, 1981.
2. T. Spear, The Kaya Complex, 1978, p.33.
3. Op.Cit., p.34.
4. Parkin, Op.Cit., 1982, p.9.
5. David Malemba Ryanga, Kambe, interviewed on the 28th January 1984.
6. J. Krapf/J. Rebmann, A Nika-English Dictionary, 1887, p.236,122.
7. Parkin, Op.Cit., 1982, p.14.
8. Krapf/Rebmann, Op.Cit., p.328.
9. Kenya National Archives: DC/KWL/3/5: 1918-1928.
10. Champion, Op.Cit., p.22.
11. Krapf/Rebmann, Op.Cit., p.197.
12. Al-Amin Mazrui, Linguist (Personal communication).
13. Krapf/Rebmann, Op.Cit., p.360; W.E. Taylor, Giryama Vocabulary and Collections, 1891, p.16.
14. Amina Yeri, Giriama, Shariani, 14th March 1984.
15. David Ryanga, 28th January 1984.
16. Parkin, Op.Cit., 1982, p.14; Mulai wa Kabao, Luvoo elders, Shariani, 19th March 1984; Amina Yeri, 14th March 1984.
17. Mulai wa Kabao, 19th March 1984.
18. Adamson, Op.Cit., pp.295,296,301.
19. Parkin, Op.Cit., 1981, p.5.
20. Op.Cit., p.15.

PART FOUR

STYLE, AESTHETICS AND MEANING

Chapter Twelve: Style in Mijikenda Art

Those few writers who have so far addressed the question of style in Mijikenda art have in fact focused specifically on vigango. The chief areas of analysis have been the decorative elements of the sculptures, whose origins the writers have been at pains to determine. Since the aim of stylistic analysis is, in part at least, to establish the regularities of form characteristic of region, period, artist, etc (cf. Layton 1981),<sup>1</sup> it is surely important to examine as wide a range of artifacts as possible rather than taking one type in isolation. In their attempts to define the style of the vigango, these writers have failed to set them in the context of Mijikenda material culture generally. Instead they have endeavoured to trace a point of origin in some other part of the world, an undertaking which has served to deflect attention from the essential basis of the Mijikenda art tradition. This is not to say that Mijikenda art must be looked at in isolation from the arts of the surrounding peoples: it is obviously important to do so for an understanding of the specific character of Mijikenda artistic traditions. But the point of examining Mijikenda art in the context of the artistic traditions of neighbouring peoples is not necessarily to derive the origins of Mijikenda style and to determine the source of their various forms. In any case it is bound to be difficult to say conclusively where any of the various peoples of the coastal region of East Africa derive their artistic traditions, or who influenced whom, given the nature of trading contacts between these peoples. The criss-crossing of cultures and the constant flow of local and overseas goods between these different groups make such a task difficult, particularly as the material culture of each of these peoples is still not sufficiently well-known to permit this.

In the following sections, discussion of Mijikenda style is preceded by a brief survey of the artifacts of four peoples selected



because they have been in close contact with the Mijikenda for a long period of time. Though the range of artifacts examined is limited, it is sufficient for the purpose of characterising the material culture of the area. Questions about origins and derivations cannot begin to be answered until we understand the extent to which Mijikenda art participates in traditions that are more widespread in this region; and this, indeed, cannot be understood until we are clear about the range of styles that actually characterise Mijikenda artifacts.

(i) A Summary of Stylistic Continuities along the East African Coast

There can be little doubt that the art of the East African coast and its immediate hinterland is characterised in certain respects by a widespread distribution of particular forms and styles. Some forms are distinctive of particular places, such as the Mijikenda mikoma and vigango, for example. But even here there may sometimes be elements of style in the decorative embellishments which appear to link the vigango with the entire region. However, it is worth remembering the Mijikenda interpretation of these as representing the painted and cicatrized patterns worn by luvoo elders, an interpretation that renders discussion of stylistic continuities irrelevant. The representation of deceased people in the manner of vigango might be evidence of cultural continuities of another kind, linking such geographically-dispersed peoples as the Bongo of Sudan, the Konso of Ethiopia and the Malagasy with the Mijikenda. On the other hand it might be entirely coincidental. At any rate it is clear that there are similarities and that, equally, there are considerable differences of both form and of context of use in the artifacts of this area of East Africa. The similarities may turn out to be local adaptations to local cultural needs of particular decorative traditions that are widespread in this region. It is true, of course, that if one looks hard enough one can see similarities of form, such as the frequency of the rectangular shapes which bear the decoration. But whether this suggests an underlying set of forms or whether it is purely coincidental, is hard to determine. At any rate, attempts to derive

Mijikenda vigango from elsewhere seem, at best, premature if not irrelevant.

(ii) The Swahili

As was pointed out in Chapter two of this study, the Mijikenda and the Swahili established trading and political alliances soon after the Mijikenda arrived in the littoral of Mombasa at the beginning of the 16th century. One of the earliest historical records, the Kitab al Zanuj, a Swahili chronicle, lists seven of the Mijikenda groups.<sup>2</sup> In 1634 Rezende reported that the Mijikenda were trading grain, amber, tobacco and 'opium' to Mombasa in return for cloth.<sup>3</sup> Other accounts are replete with the types of alliances established by Swahili and the Mijikenda. It is noted in historical records that the Mijikenda were allied with the different Swahili factions along the coast; alliances being formed between neighbouring groups.<sup>4</sup>

By the time the Mijikenda arrived, the Swahili world was in a state of upheaval because of the Portuguese invasion. Most of the Mijikenda groups joined forces with the Swahili against the Portuguese, but the Rabai and the Chonyi appear to have aided the Portuguese.<sup>5</sup> The Portuguese were finally ousted in 1729.

The 15th century is considered to have been the Golden Age of the Swahili world.<sup>6</sup> The period from the 12th to the 15th centuries gave rise to flourishing towns such as Mogadisho, Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa and Kilwa, which developed as a result of the active Indian Ocean trade.<sup>7</sup> However, this was interrupted by the Portuguese in the 16th century and became localized. The towns were unable to regain economic growth until the overthrow of the Portuguese. In the 12th and 13th centuries Swahili society began to build coral rag houses and to construct mosques using the same material. Large quantities of Islamic and Chinese pottery, glass beads and fabrics were imported. By the 14th and 15th centuries more coral houses, mosques, tombs and palaces were in evidence and there was a greater increase in the importation of luxury goods: gold and silver, silks, gold-embroidered cloths and carpets.<sup>8</sup> Between 1700 and 1900, wood-carvings, furniture of different types, silks, cottons, jewellery, silver and gold work, were manufactured in profusion.<sup>9</sup> As far as woodcarving is concerned (and which is significant for a discussion

of Mijikenda art) Allen lists at least five or six distinct carving styles. Some of the items he refers to are doors which had carved frames. According to him 'a fine door might consist of as many as ten heavily-carved pieces as well as door-panels'.<sup>10</sup> Household wooden objects were also produced, such as circular eating trays (which were often richly decorated), coconut graters, pestles and mortars, beds, etc. Many of these household artifacts are the same as those used today by the Mijikenda.

According to Allen, the Swahili carving tradition has been attributed to Indian, Persian or Arabian sources, and the study of Swahili culture has been neglected because it was considered derivative, second-rate and insignificant.<sup>11</sup> Allen dismisses such allegations and states that in his view the woodcarving is typically Swahili. For example, he says that Swahili carved doors are 'entirely sui generis in conception and arrangement'.<sup>12</sup> According to him

it is interesting to note, however, that the wood-carving style involving the excision of a large number of (usually) geometric shapes, which in East Africa has been identified as Arab as opposed to Indian, has been called African, as opposed to Arab, when it appears in northern Africa and the Maghrib.<sup>13</sup>

It must be noted that while Allen disputes these views which regard Swahili art traditions as Arab, he does acknowledge that Swahili culture is essentially Islamic. He says that this culture was subject to 'arabising' influences but that by 1400 A.D., or earlier, Swahili culture was very different from Arab culture, and that it developed thereafter as an 'autonomous' culture.<sup>14</sup>

The search for external, non-African sources for Swahili art forms, at least until very recently, may well be comparable to the initial unwillingness to attribute the brass castings of Ife, or the initiation of brass casting in Benin, to local craftsmen. Further to that, the assessment of East African art has been held back by the bias in favour of West and Central Africa as the source of anything of importance in African art.

The Swahili artifacts which have the most obvious resemblance to Mijikenda objects are the doorpanels and doorlintels carved with incised patterns. The long narrow shapes might be considered to resemble the basic shape of the kigango, but there are differences

in the overall arrangement and distribution of motifs on the surface of these objects. Another object with similar motifs is a Koran stand. In these Swahili objects the surfaces are covered in a mass of intricate designs, unlike the Mijikenda vigango which usually have a minimum of patterns, usually running down the borders of the rectangular forms. It is rare to find these memorial sculptures carved in a mass of patterns in the manner of Swahili work, though some may well have been carved in this way. (See photographs in Wolfe 1979, p.30, Sl3; Siroto 1979, 107,111; Adamson 1957; Tafel XX).<sup>15</sup> This is an example of two artistic traditions sharing certain aspects, yet using them in strikingly different ways, such as to reinforce the suggestion of a widely distributed decorative tradition with distinctive local adaptations. This comparison of rectangular forms taken out of context from two different cultural environments might seem bizarre, yet that is what the derivation of the art of one culture from that of the other would seem to demand. At least one of the essential differences between these two artistic traditions will be obvious.

The concentrated mass of decorative motifs in Swahili art may well have had economic motivation as the indulgent expression of a wealthy upper class which had the money to commission elaborately decorated objects. It is obviously much more expensive to have a door-panel covered in a mass of carved patterns than a simple one. Another difference between Swahili and Mijikenda arts lies in the context of use of the objects. The Swahili work is essentially a decorative embellishment, whereas the vigango have an instrumental value in a ritual context. The simplicity of the vigango might also be partly explained by the fact that these objects are usually produced in a crisis, and there is a need to make them in as short a time as possible. It may also be explained by the fact that these are not elements of competing economic status (at least not overtly); and finally the reason might lie in a cultural preference for simplicity of form.

The differences may be seen in Figures 53 and 54 of door-panels, a koran stand and Mijikenda vigango. The similarity of the individual motifs is quite obvious; the dissimilarity lies in the overall arrangement of these units of pattern. As far as the apparent likeness of the elongated rectangular shapes of the door-

panels and vigango is concerned, this could, of course, be purely coincidental.

(iii) The Bajun

The Bajun are Swahili-speaking people, traditionally engaging in fishing, who inhabit the Lamu Archipelago. They are Muslims and are considered to be one of the oldest of the Swahili groups. They speak a northern dialect of Swahili known as Gunya or T'ik'uu.<sup>16</sup> Bajun traditions of origin indicate that they occupied the coast from south of Kismayu to Lamu, and were driven down by the Oroma in the 16th century and 17 century to the Lamu Archipelago.<sup>17</sup> They have a woodcarving style, characterised by incised patterns, as do other coastal peoples.

Two examples of Bajun objects which can be compared to Mijikenda vigango are a sliding lid of a small mortar (in the Brooklyn Museum. No. 22. 810.) and wooden paddles used to decorate bread. The lid is covered in incised zig-zag lines, created by a series of triangles running down the sides (see photograph in Bravmann 1983, 111).<sup>18</sup> These motifs resemble those found on some vigango. The lid of the mortar can be said to bear a slight resemblance to the rectangular shape of vigango; it has a handle which forms a 'neck' which runs into the 'shoulders' of the main panel, and finally the panel itself. This particular form is commonly found along the coastal region and appears in combs as well as doors of coastal houses. The shape might be described simply as a circle on a rectangle. The motifs used on the lid are composed of crosses, horizontal lines and concentric circles (Fig. 63). The paddles are carved with a mass of incised triangles in such a manner as to create a series of crosses. This motif is frequently used in Mijikenda woodcarvings (Figs. 54,59). Once again, we have two distinct art traditions sharing elements of a decorative style.

Some of the obvious differences between Bajun and Mijikenda artistic work are to be found in their ornaments. The Bajun do not use beaded bracelets such as the Mijikenda vorodede. Bajun beaded necklaces bear little resemblance to Mijikenda types. These bead necklaces tend to utilize dark coloured beads, such as black, maroon, mauve and the patterns are densely grouped together with little or

no white space between them thus tending to make the beadwork appear visually dense, unlike Mijikenda beadwork which uses light colours such as pale greens, amber, yellow, red, turquoise, dark blues, orange and white, arranged in such a way as to create vertical and horizontal bands of colours, triangular shapes and diagonal lines interposed over a white background. The effect created in Mijikenda beadwork is a visually light, delicate one. Metal ornaments are also very different. Bajun metalwork is predominantly of silver and gold, metals not used (at least these days) by the Mijikenda. The shapes of ornaments, such as earplugs, for example, are very different. The Bajun do not use the conical and 'mushroom' types of earplugs that the Mijikenda use. Bajun earplugs tend to be solid round 'box' types. On the other hand, household artifacts, such as pestles and mortars, beds and plaited palm leaf mats, are very similar in form and manufacture.

(iv) The Boni

The Boni live in the coastal hinterland, in an area stretching from the south of Lamu to the north beyond Kiungu. They belong to the Oromo subgroup of the Eastern Cushitic language group.<sup>19</sup> The Boni are hunters by occupation. In the 1800s they traded ivory to the Giriama in exchange for cloth, beads and wire, which the Giriama acquired through trade from the Swahili.

The Boni carve wooden combs, headrests, swagger sticks and spoons which utilize incised patterns. According to Jean Brown, Boni informants she interviewed said they derived their motifs from the Swahili doors of Lamu.<sup>20</sup> The designs are intricately carved and are composed of a series of lines, zig-zag lines, crosses, circles and triangles and sometimes interlacing lines. The patterns are similar to those used by the Swahili, Bajun and the Mijikenda and indeed by other coastal peoples such as the Somali groups in the northern coast. Boni combs are sold to the Swahili and Bajun.<sup>21</sup> According to Boni informants, they carve their combs to resemble the human form, with a 'head', 'neck' and 'body' (Figs. 60,61). Boni spoons also bear this human shape, and are in fact very similar to the combs (Fig. 62). These items and their motifs can be compared to vigango in shape and motif, and to Mijikenda wooden ear

plugs in motif (Figs. 47,60,62). Again, such similarities may be purely coincidental. However, even if we accepted that similarities of shape and form were other than coincidental, it nevertheless remains true that the use to which these forms are put is entirely distinctive of separate art traditions.

(v) The Kamba

The Kamba are not a coastal people, but live in the inland of Kenya. Some Kamba communities were set up in the 1830s and 1840s in the coastal hinterland. The reason why their work is being discussed is because they have come to dominate the coastal region as producers of tourist art. In trying to analyse Mijikenda style it is important to look at Kamba carving in order to establish whether it shares any similarities with Mijikenda work, particularly as the Kamba for a long time have had close trading contacts with the Mijikenda.

The Giriama were the first Mijikenda people to trade actively with the Kamba living in the inland of Kenya. Trading relationships were established and maintained through 'blood-brotherhood' ties which extended over lineages and sub-clans. The Giriama exchanged cloth, beads and wire (acquired from the Swahili) for cattle and ivory from the Kamba. In the 1820s the Kamba began to trade directly with the Arabs and Swahili, first through their Giriama allies, and gradually with other Mijikenda, such as the Rabai. By 1836 Kamba colonies had been established around Kaya Giriama, close to their Giriama 'blood-brothers', and in the Rabai area and parts of Duruma District.

The inland Kamba had a carving tradition prior to the development of the 'Kamba' tourist art trade. They carved a variety of artifacts such as stools (Figs. 64,65,66), spoons, stoppers and gargoyle-like figures which are said to have been used to guard homes from evil spirits. According to Dick-Read (1964) these gargoyle figures bore some resemblance to wooden figures which began to appear in the public market around 1914.<sup>22</sup> As far as stoppers are concerned, Brown (1972) writes that Kamba 'sorcerers' used to obtain 'sorcery' sculptures from the Giriama or the Digo because the magical techniques of these two coastal groups were considered

by the Kamba to be far more potent than their own.<sup>23</sup> Other artifacts traditionally made by the Kamba bear some likeness to Mijikenda work, but there are marked differences. The stools, for example, appear much more elaborate in form and decoration than Mijikenda ones (Figs. 64,65,66); the triangular motifs excised on Mijikenda stools appear not to occur as frequently in Kamba stools. The Kamba have a propensity to use beads and wire to create different types of patterns on their stools. The legs of these stools, particularly those preserved in the British Museum (i.e. B.M. 1971. Af. 13-5; B.M. 1940. Af. 11-19; B.M. 1947. Af. 16-242; B.M. 1947. Af. 16-5), likewise are elaborately carved, in all sorts of interesting shapes, some semicircular with holes carved through them, some rectangular, and some box-shaped (Figs. 65,66). The surfaces of the stools are frequently patterned with embedded beads and wire, arranged in concentric, star, moon, linear and semi-circular motifs, for example (Fig. 66). Though Mijikenda informants said their own stools used to be very elaborately made in the past, today they are certainly not as varied in design and form as the Kamba types, though these elaborate Kamba stools are obsolescent.

As far as beadwork is concerned, the Kamba utilized the same twining technique to make beaded belts, armbands and aprons. Many of these beaded artifacts are no longer made though some 'modern' beadwork has been developed for the tourist trade. Kamba beadwork is quite different in motif from Mijikenda beadwork. Though the triangular motif is common, the Kamba use it in quite a distinctive manner (Plates: 140-143).

As far as carving for the 'tourist' market is concerned, the Kamba began the trade soon after the First World War.<sup>24</sup> The industry has now developed into an extremely productive and lucrative trade which supplies naturalistic figurative sculptures and other forms to major cities in the western world as well as to foreign visitors to Kenya. (The Kamba tourist trade is discussed in more detail in Chapter fourteen of this thesis.) Despite the fact that there are a large number of Kamba sculptures working at the coast, and just as many Kamba curio-suppliers selling these objects, there appears to be no apparent artistic influence on Mijikenda work. There are instances, however, when Mijikenda men, wishing to carve for the tourist market, have brought in Kamba carvers to teach them



how to carve the relevant forms. The artifacts carved for use within Mijikenda culture still remain distinctive in style. What has happened, as might be expected, given the nature of the tourist art market, is that Kamba carvers have begun carving vigango specifically for tourist consumption. They are carved without relevance to any ritual context, in Kamba carving cooperatives at the coast. For example, in 1984, one of my informants saw a lorry-load of vigango, produced by Kamba carvers in Malindi, being transported to Mombasa where they were to be exported for sale in America.

Clearly then, there is some degree of overlap in form, and perhaps style, with regard to selected types of artifacts, between Kamba and Mijikenda material culture; it nevertheless remains true that these are distinctive styles. What has developed within recent years in the tourist industry is the Kamba copying of Mijikenda forms, i.e. vigango; while another is the Mijikenda copying of Kamba carving, i.e. what are considered Kamba-tourist art forms, such as masks, animal and human figures, etc., for an external market.

Before examining Mijikenda artifacts, it is worth summarizing the common elements of style in the arts of the East African coastal region, a style referred to as 'Azanian' in a recently published book on Somali artistic traditions.<sup>25</sup>

Firstly, the most obvious element of style is the use of incised triangles to create a common decorative tradition, characterized by the use of the triangular motif to create a range of patterns such as chevrons, zig-zags, 'union-jacks' (or crosses), rosettes, etc. At the most tenuous, and perhaps deep, underlying, level is the use of the rectangular form in combination with the circle or square to create a shape resembling the human figure. The fact that this 'human' form occurs in a wide range of objects such as spoons, combs, door-panels, Islamic prayer boards, memorial sculptures, door-ways of mosques and coastal houses, would seem to suggest that the use of such a form cannot be purely coincidental.

Secondly, the specific forms, particularly those associated with politico-ritual institutions, have their particular contexts of use not common to each of the different peoples of this coastal region.

Therefore, in so far as styles of particular cultures are

concerned, the sum total of the range of styles associated with specific forms is an assemblage unique to each culture, and in this connection it would be difficult to pinpoint the precise origins of such forms, motifs and overall styles.

(vi) Mijikenda Style

Having discussed some of the forms and motifs in the artistic works of peoples living in close proximity to the Mijikenda, we now turn to Mijikenda work itself.

The section begins with a summary of existing literature on Mijikenda artistic traditions. This is followed by an examination of the formal properties of Mijikenda artifacts themselves. A summary of the elements that may be viewed as constituting style then follows, together with a discussion of aesthetics and meaning in Mijikenda art.

(a) Previous Accounts of Mijikenda Artifacts

In 1873 Charles New, a missionary working in the Mijikenda localities, dismissed Mijikenda artifacts in one sweeping sentence: 'in handicraft the Wanika are not clever'.<sup>25</sup> He went on further to comment on Mijikenda memorial sculptures:

the Wanika erect memorial posts, grotesquely carved and bedaubed with paint, at the head of the grave.<sup>27</sup>

Though New does not describe these memorial sculptures more fully, it is at least clear enough that they were carved and painted. New also noted that the Mijikenda made their own houses which were thatched, and that they made bedsteads, stools, mortar<sub>s</sub> and pestles, hafting hoes and axes, iron chains, and iron and brass beads. According to him men plaited 'good strong mats' of palm leaf and also made bags and baskets. Already we get an idea of the range of materials utilized by the Mijikenda. From his account it can be deduced that the Mijikenda had a tradition of sculpting, smithing, mat-making, basketry and house-building.

In 1909, Hollis, a District Officer in the coast province, described memorial posts in much the same sweeping dismissal (and

almost word for word) as New. He described a post as being either  
grotesquely carved to resemble the deceased or is shaped in  
a fantastic form and bedaubed with paint; at other times it  
is plain. 28

Hollis has gone a step further and given a clue as to the style of  
these memorial sculptures, perhaps implying that some were  
naturalistic ('to resemble the deceased') and some were schematic  
('shaped in a fantastic form'). Together with this description of  
the posts, Hollis accompanies his article with photographs (1909,  
145, plate K).<sup>29</sup> According to him the Jibana and Chonyi were more  
given to carving the 'headstones' than the other Mijikenda groups.  
By 'headstones' he means the wooden posts.

Johnstone in 1902 refers to Rabai memorials as 'rudely carved  
head sticks'. Johnstone also mentions copper and brass jewellery,  
but without describing it. He makes a reference to a sacred drum  
preserved in the custody of old men, but does not describe it.<sup>30</sup>

Barrett's article on the Giriama offers a more detailed list  
of material artifacts. He refers to objects used in marriage and  
health ceremonies. These included earthenware cooking pots, pots  
for palm wine used during courting and marriage, drinking bowls for  
palm wine, drinking gourds, knives, hoes, red and black cloths for  
the bride and armbands made from goatskin by the husbands for their  
wives after marriage.<sup>31</sup> He also mentions memorial posts and sticks.  
He calls memorial posts 'monuments' and describes them as figures  
carved out of flat pieces of wood about two inches thick, and about  
five feet in length and nine inches in width. He talks of memorial  
sticks, koma, as being simply pieces of wood.<sup>32</sup> From Barrett's  
description it emerges that memorial posts had a measurement  
corresponding to an average height of a Mijikenda man. Here at last  
we have a clear description of the form rather than a pejorative  
dismissal.

Werner carried out research on the ethnography of the Mijikenda  
in the early 1900s.<sup>33</sup> Like previous writers, Werner comments on  
memorial posts and refers to Hollis' photographs published in Man  
(Hollis, 1909, 145, plate K). Werner gives a more detailed  
description of these sculptures, describing the ones she saw at  
Kaya Chonyi and Kaya Kambe at Magarini as:

very neatly carved vigango - some being surmounted by a more or less realistic human head, others being merely decorated with simple geometric patterns.<sup>34</sup>

She also talks of one of these sculptures at Magarini as being 'not unlike the bust of Octavianus Augustus', and one at Kaya Kambe as having 'a certain resemblance to a well-known politician'.<sup>35</sup>

Werner's descriptions, unlike those of previous writers, begin to evaluate these sculptures (vigango) artistically and stylistically. They impressed her as well-made, and rendered in representational ('realistic') and schematic ('merely decorated') modes.

Champion's study of the Giriama in 1914 (but only published in 1967) was more comprehensive.<sup>36</sup> Champion was Assistant District Commissioner in the Giriama region at that time and made extensive notes of certain aspects of Giriama society. In the section on material culture, he covers in detail the techniques and design of housebuilding and houses. In addition, he lists various ornaments and clothing, and household furniture, but does not give any details of these objects. He noted that women wore a kilt-like (i.e. pleated and gathered) skirt, called rinda, which reached from the waist to the knees. Later they adopted the two-piece clothes of the Swahili, i.e. brightly coloured cotton cloths wrapped round the body. In addition women also wore beaded bands and amulets. Smiths made hoe heads, knives, arrowheads and swords.

Champion describes memorial posts as being made of carved wood and that

the top is carved to roughly imitate the outline of the head. Nose, eyes and mouth are sometimes represented.<sup>37</sup>

He further comments that

more care is now being devoted to their construction than in the past, some showing considerable proficiency with carving tools.<sup>38</sup>

The photographs in the book show that these memorial posts were basically schematic in form. Although Champion gives a detailed account of housebuilding, he does not give a detailed description of the memorial sculptures. His comment about more care being devoted to the making of the posts in 1914 poses a number of questions as to whether the style was what was changing, or whether the makers were getting better at sculpting, or whether Champion was merely

making an unsupported statement. One is tempted to ask how many of these vigango Champion had seen in order to make a conclusive remark like this.

Griffiths' article of 1935 of the Duruma gives a list of household items such as mortars, grindstones, winnowing baskets, earthenware cooking pots of different sizes, wooden vessels for serving food, wooden spoons, hatchets, billhooks and hoes.<sup>39</sup> He talks of a type of initiation dress, part of which consisted of a belt of seeds (called flui), a mask and club. This parallels archival information which describes the dress worn by initiates dancing the mungaro, in which men wore women's skirts, called rinda, made of wild date leaves (mkindu), bells made of borassus palm nuts and a string of mfwihi nuts strung on a thin piece of hide.<sup>40</sup> Griffiths does not give any information on the masks he mentions, but later Adamson (1967) described these masks as being used for catching slaves, as described below. Griffiths noted that the Duruma used magical medicine which he called 'charms' but unfortunately gives no descriptions of them.

In the early 1950s, Joy Adamson travelled all over Kenya painting pictures of the various peoples of Kenya. She was funded by the colonial government whose administrative officers facilitated her travels throughout the different regions. Her book is a wealth of visual material, but weak in textual content.<sup>41</sup> Her paintings, preserved in the Kenya National Museum, Nairobi, are a visual documentation of the material culture of the peoples of Kenya. As far as Mijikenda artifacts are concerned, Adamson's photographs, reproductions of her paintings and brief comments on these artifacts, have some value for our discussion of style. Adamson refers at length to Mijikenda memorial posts which obviously captivated her. She frequently describes them as 'beautifully carved'<sup>42</sup> and gives her impressions of them. She comments on a kigango she saw in Kaya Chonyi as having

an exquisitely carved head with so sensitive an expression that it seemed almost alive.<sup>43</sup>

She describes another Chonyi kigango as being a form in which 'a comb personified the head' and that others indicated the human anatomy by geometrical designs whose triangles were filled with

red ochre, white ash or charcoal, mixed with the latex of the euphorbia which subsequently hardened into an enamel-like consistency. Adamson marks out Jibana vigango as being 'naturalistic' and 'abstract' and comments that some of the older types were similar to the Chonyi ones.<sup>44</sup> According to her the Ribe vigango appeared much older than others she had seen and were much 'more abstract in design'. She describes one as having the ribs and pelvis shaped into quadrangular blocks and the head as being 'symbolized by a rhomboidal comb'. In addition she mentions a simple round pole with a naturalistically carved head.<sup>45</sup> Adamson is one of the first of the writers to give a very detailed description of vigango. Her illustrations are particularly useful for placing alongside more recent vigango in an attempt to trace any changes in style.

Other than these sculptures in wood, Adamson refers to wooden and leather masks. Masks are described as being worn by 'slave-catchers' and that the purpose of them was to attract slaves who would be subsequently be caught. One mask is described as carved with 'soft, round features of a woman', and another as carved in a 'square, strong shape' to which a false beard was attached. The wearer of the 'female' mask was dressed in 'feminine ornaments' such as ankle-bells (i.e. metal rattles), a string of beads round the waist. The other wearer wore male attire.<sup>45</sup> Though Adamson talks of these wooden masks as being used in catching slaves, it is possible that they may have been connected with men's initiation rites, in which leather masks were sometimes used.<sup>46</sup> Informants interviewed in 1984, talked of some craftsmen with the ability to carve masks, but they were unable to give information about the use of these masks. However, they did say that during initiation ceremonies men used to wear women-type skirts made of strips of palm leaves. Nowadays such skirts are worn by male dancers at funeral and remembrance feasts (Plate: 94).

Adamson talks at length about healers' objects. One object she writes about is a Duruma healer's staff, the top of which bore carvings of a man and woman. The female figure was depicted in detail, but the male one was not. When asked by Adamson why this was so, the healer shrugged and said that it was obvious that the male figure was male, and therefore needed little detail. In addition to this staff the healer (called 'witchdoctor' by Adamson)

showed her drawings he had done. Adamson attempts to make a stylistic comparison between Egyptian art and these particular drawings, which were done in blue and red (the only available colours in the shop according to Adamson. It should be also noted that these colours are commonly used in a ritual context, and may, therefore have been used with this purpose in mind). One drawing depicted the spirit of 'trembling illness' (probably malaria) and another showed a coiled python, the 'spirit of snake bite', and another showed the 'spirit of Leika Mungo'. In comparing these drawings to Egyptian art she notes that the head and extremities were done in profile, while the rest of the body was viewed from the front and drawn flat. It is these qualities which Adamson likens to Egyptian art.<sup>47</sup> According to her, the designs on the drawings correspond to those found on old grave posts she had seen in Kaya Chonyi. This particular healer also carried a carved wooden doll, representing a spirit he consulted, and various other magical medicine. Drawings and photographs of these healers show them wearing a variety of ornaments, including ivory bracelets which have sometimes been wrongly described as luvoo bracelets. He also had an assortment of other magical objects.

(b) Recent Literature on Mijikenda Artifacts

The most recently published material on Mijikenda artistic objects (specifically vigango) is by Jean Brown (1972 and 1980); Leon Siroto (1979); David Parkin (1982); and Parkin, Sieber and Wolfe (1981).<sup>48</sup> With the exception of Parkin who has concentrated more on the ritual context of vigango, the other writers have focused on vigango with a view to establishing their origins, both formally and stylistically. They have covered the context of use of these artifacts, but none of them has set the vigango in the context of Mijikenda material culture generally.

Brown (1980) points out that the Mijikenda utilize the same geometric designs as found on Swahili door frames, lintels and centre posts of doors.<sup>49</sup> Brown's attempt at the question of style reveals major inconsistencies, however. She writes that

The Islamic influence on Mijikenda grave posts is obvious in their geometric carving, in the sun and moon motifs, and in

their similarity to the center posts of doors in Islamic Arab/Swahili coastal towns, but the style of geometric carving is entirely African, as is the idea of sculpting a naturalistic head to represent the ancestor.<sup>50</sup>

The above statement is contradictory. If by 'geometric carving' Brown means the technique itself, then there are two main questions to be answered: firstly, if the Mijikenda utilized this technique, why should it have necessitated their using Islamic motifs? If this type of carving technique produces specific motifs (i.e. geometric, and more specifically the triangle), what is it about these geometric motifs that determines their Islamic nature? On the other hand, if she means the corpus of motifs and the way in which they are organized on the surface of vigango, what is it that makes them Islamic? Is it the particular shapes; the formal arrangement of these shapes; or the combination of these shapes which constitute Islamic style? What does Brown mean by style of geometric carving? Is she talking specifically about the chip-carving technique? If this is what she means, then by saying that this technique is entirely African, it means by implication that she considers the Swahili and Arabs to have an African carving technique or, again by implication, that the Swahili and Arabs have borrowed this African technique. As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, it is difficult to pinpoint the precise origins of this geometric carving tradition typical of the East African coast. It is more than likely that geometric carving is both Islamic and African.

In his discussion of vigango, Siroto describes their formal properties and their ritual use. He then proposes that

the formal and conceptual monologues of the kigango may indicate an early sub-Saharan tradition which was interrupted by the Islamic proscription of images, leaving only isolated survivals scattered over a region.<sup>51</sup>

There is no historical evidence for this proposal which must remain entirely hypothetical. In addition, naturalistic forms, including the human figure, have merged in many Islamic areas (cf. Bravmann 1984),<sup>52</sup> which disproves Siroto's point concerning proscription of images. Siroto further comments that the memorial post is 'distinguished by a foreign style of decoration' and that this may have derived from an intermixing of African and Asian cultures.<sup>53</sup>



As to the form itself, Siroto cites examples of funerary memorials used by the Zaramo of Tanzania, the Konso and Gato of Ethiopia, the Bongo of Sudan and finally the Antandruy of Malagasy.<sup>54</sup> Though, as already said earlier, it is possible that the similarities are entirely coincidental.

Parkin's articles (1981 and 1982) give detailed information on the ritual aspects of vigango. He does not attempt a stylistic analysis, but he does point out that the triangular motifs used on vigango are frequently found in other objects, such as stools, beadwork, etc. He also notes that vigango are perceived by the Mijikenda as having aesthetic as well as practical value.<sup>55</sup>

Sieber, like Siroto, gives descriptions of vigango, and hypotheses about their possible origins. Sieber points out the differences between Mijikenda memorial posts and Malagasy posts. An interesting point he makes is that geometric decoration on Malagasy posts is rarely found on carved wooden bodies of the human figures, with the exception of one published in Siroto (1979, 113). Sieber suggests that the similarity of the decorative styles of Malagasy and Mijikenda posts may be due to a common source in Swahili carving. He notes the close resemblance of Swahili and Mijikenda decorative motifs (i.e. triangles). Decorative patterns based upon triangles can be found in the work of various peoples across North Africa and the East African coast.<sup>56</sup> Sieber ends on an important point - saying that whatever interaction did take place of the different cultures, what has been produced in vigango is 'an aesthetic coherence, a cohesion that makes these memorial posts a significant, if as yet undervalued form of African sculpture'.<sup>57</sup> Sieber categorizes the commemorative sculptures into two main types: the round head and the circular head. In the first type the post is plank-like and topped with a three dimensional, naturalistic head. In the second type the post has a circular flat head, is much more 'abstract' (schematic) and at times has no indication of features. He notes that an analysis of published illustrations indicates that the seven Mijikenda groups which produce vigango make posts that have both flat and round-headed types.<sup>58</sup>

(vii) An Examination of Mijikenda Artifacts

The following is an account based on an examination of objects preserved in the Kenya National Museum, the British Museum, the Kenya National Archives, the African Heritage Gallery, and of objects found and examined in curio-stalls and in the field.

The forms, motifs, and designs of the objects will be described, and similarities in the different artifacts will be pinpointed. This account of the objects will be used in a tentative analysis of style.

(a) Ornaments

Metal ornaments display a range of incised, and sometimes inlaid, patterns, some of which are very finely and intricately done, and some very simply done. The motifs are often triangular, linear or circular. The arrangement of lines in various ways often creates areas of triangular spaces. Some of the lines are set in a way as to create a series of triangles and radial patterns.

The simplest of the metal ornaments are probably the aluminium clasps made to fasten beadwork or metal necklaces. These clasps have simple incised patterning, some of which are triangular, and some of which are a series of diagonal lines, and some are zig-zag. These simple motifs are similar to the ones used on some earplugs. Clasp number KNM. UC 1969. 71 shows a set of lines used in a manner as to create triangular spaces. The zig-zag lines create spaces of opposing triangles, which are common in many Mijikenda artifacts, such as on commemorative sculptures. Clasp number KNM. UC 1969. 53 has a series of diagonal lines closely set together (Fig. 49).

(i) Bracelets and Anklets

Copper, iron and brass bracelets and anklets come in different shapes and patterning. Some types are made of two sections fastened together with ebony pins. The bracelets and anklets are usually round in shape and some are more complex, like octagonal ones. Some of them are decorated with well-organised patterns, while others have a more random arrangement and some have no patterning at all. The patterns are incised, inlaid, hammered in, or cut and filed. The motifs are linear, circular, and triangular. In contrast to

beadwork and aluminium discs, there seems to be no attempt to develop an overall sequence of patterns in these bracelets. Occasionally some are decorated with a series of inlaid ebony triangles and copper lines, some of which form triangular patterns (Plate: 41; Figs. 16,17,18,19).

The Mijikenda also have ivory bracelets made of three or four sections held together with ebony pins. They are undecorated except for the pins. These ivory bracelets have practically disappeared. The making of them stopped after the hunting of elephants was banned by the post-colonial government (Plates: 42,43).

(ii) Earplugs

The Mijikenda use earplugs (vifufu) made out of aluminium or wood. Sometimes plain maize stalk ones are used temporarily to keep the pierced earlobes from closing (Fig. 13). The wooden type (Fig. 13; UC 1969. 60 a,b) is commonly used when the metal earplugs are not being worn. These are often decorated with incised geometrical motifs, very similar to those found on other Mijikenda artifacts and on Boni spoons and combs. The shape of the wooden earplug is cylindrical.

Giriama aluminium earplugs are 'mushroom'-shaped with a 'stem' projecting from the inside section of the form. At the top of the 'mushroom' there is a small projection which is placed through the perforation in the earlobe, so that the 'stem' protrudes outwards from the wearer's head. Other Giriama types have flatter disc-shapes but still with projections at the top and 'stems' from the centre. These are worn in the same manner (Plate: 40; Figs. 11,12).

The Duruma earplugs are either cone-shaped or cylindrical. The cone-shaped type has a small projection to enable it to be worn through the ears. Within the cone there is a very small projection. In some cases the cone element is not present, leaving instead a small projection coming out from the disc. The other Duruma type consists of a cylindrical or tubular shape ending with a disc and then a projection. This form looks like an elaboration of the wooden and maize stalk earplugs (Plate: 39; Figs. 9,10).

These cone and mushroom-shaped earplugs are quite unique to the Mijikenda. None of the surrounding peoples appear to use these types of earplugs. The Bajun earplugs, for example, are round, box-shaped types. It appears that Mijikenda ear ornaments may have

originally been ring-shaped and simple cylindrical types. In the Krapf/Rebmann dictionary (1887), these cylindrical earplugs were called kibuli (pl. vibuli). In the Taylor dictionary (1891) the ornament is called kipuli (pl. vipuli). The Krapf/Rebmann dictionary describes this ornament as a 'pendant for the ear, consisting of a piece of brass about the length of a finger and worked ornamentally' (1887, 154). The cone and mushroom-shaped earplugs would seem to have been a later development since neither of the dictionaries made any reference to them. According to a maker of these earplugs, the Giriama derived the 'stem' type from the Duruma.

(iii) Aluminium Discs

Aluminium discs called mweri are worn by women in the hair or dangling from their skirts at the back, or by teething children. The discs vary in diameter from about two inches to four inches. Some of the discs are more decorative than others. Many of them combine engraved motifs and inlaid ebony and copper (Plate: 39; Figs. 14,15). Metal mweri is said to have developed from a type originally made from cut conus shell.

In one disc (Fig. 14, A) there is an inlaid copper element surrounded by double circles of incised lines. Out of these lines radiate eight double lines, alternatively divided by a small circle with a dot in the centre. These radial lines are enclosed by two lines running round the border of the disc. The incised lines have a zig-zag effect, created during patterning by moving a knife along the surface in quick, jerky movements. The reverse side has an almost identical pattern.

Another disc (Fig. 14, B) has one side decorated and one undecorated. The surface is divided into four sections by a set of four triple lines radiating from the centre where a small circular space is left. The effect created is of four triangular spaces, one of which has two sets of triple lines cutting across diagonally to touch the radial lines. There are no bordering lines.

A smaller disc (Fig. 14, C) has one side decorated and the other plain. The patterns have been engraved in such a manner as to give a herringbone effect. A small kidney-shaped copper piece is inlaid at the centre. It is enclosed by a set of lines worked in the same herringbone pattern. Eight double herringbone lines, which produce

an effect of small mirror-imaged triangles, divide the surface into eight triangular spaces, two of which are incised horizontally with triple lines. These lines are enclosed by a pair of herringbone lines running round the outer border.

Disc number NCS. 1985. M1 (Fig. 15) is decorated on both sides. Side A has a circular piece of ebony inlaid at the centre and within it, to one side of it, a small almost circular piece of copper, is also inlaid. The surface is divided into eight by four petal-shaped double lines. In between each petal are incised lines forming a more or less diamond shape. This has the effect of shading the surface closest to the petal shapes and highlighting them. The petal and diamond shapes are finally enclosed by double lines at the outer border. Side B of this disc similarly has ebony and copper inlaid in the centre. It has a series of lines which create a six-sided star shape. Each point of the star is diamond-shaped, created by six double lines radiating from the centre. The points of the star form six triangular spaces, each of which is incised with a mass of lines divided by a thin blank space. Triple lines run between the points of the star, to give an impression that they border the shapes.

Disc number NCS. 1985. M2 (Fig. 15) is decorated on both sides. One side is much more complex, while the other is simple. Side A is inlaid at the centre with concentric circles of ebony, leaving a small blank spot right in the middle. The outer circle of ebony has a set of eight lines radiating from it to divide the surface into eight sections. Between each of these lines is a triangle, formed alternately by a single line and double lines with their tips pointing towards the centre. Within the single-line triangle is a triangle formed with close-set incised lines. In the double-lined triangle are two horizontal lines set close to the border of the disc. The arrangement of the triangles and radiating lines create eight broad diagonal spaces, which echo the smaller radial lines. Side B of the disc has inlaid concentric ebony circles, from which radiate a set of eight triple lines which divide the surface into eight triangular spaces.

(iv) Beaded Bracelets

Beaded bracelets provide one further example of the arrangement of triangular forms characteristic of the arts of the East African coastal region. Triangular shapes, diagonal lines, horizontal and vertical blocks are combined to give different effects in the bead-work. In some the combination gives the effect of chevrons, while others give the effect of 'union jacks' and radiating patterns, some of which give an impression of a series of crosses. Some of the combinations of shapes are very similar to those found on commemorative sculptures. This may appear to be stretching the point of triangular motifs, but the motif is so frequently used that it is difficult to dismiss its use as purely coincidental.

Bracelet number KNM. UC 1968. 358B (Plate: 35) is five inches long by one inch wide and has amber, orange, pale green, dark green, pale yellow, dark blue, red, clear glass, turquoise and white beads. The bracelet is divided into four sections, each section being a square. Each square is divided into eight triangular sections, something in the manner of 'union jacks', into a series of eight triangles radiating from the centre. Each square is separated from the next by a narrow band running across the bracelet which itself is divided into sections. The various shapes are created by areas of white beads alternating with beads of another colour. If two white sections are juxtaposed they will be separated by a thin line of some other colour. And if two colours are juxtaposed they will be separated by a thin line of white. Bands of white run along each edge of the bracelet which are sometimes interrupted by small areas of colour.

Another variation of arrangement of the triangles occurs when four triangles radiate from the centre. In this case the triangles are composed of a coloured border enclosing triangles of white beads. The triangles are separated by rectangular bands of white to give an impression from a distance of a series of crosses. This type of arrangement can be seen in bracelets number KNM. UC 1969. 327 (Plate: 32,34). This arrangement also gives an effect of arrow heads, and if the bracelet is held lengthwise, the patterns resemble houses, with the rectangular shapes forming the walls, and the pointed, triangular shape the roof. This probably explains Jean Brown's notes in the Museum records that sometimes the motifs represent

houses in which the horizontal lines represent the windows, the slanting lines the outline of the house and the triangles the roof. According to an informant I interviewed, the triangular shapes are called mabao (sing. lubao). Though the word lubao means a plank of wood, the informant said that this meaning has nothing to do with wood when used in connection with beadwork; it simply refers to the patterns of colour in the beadwork. The diagonal lines of coloured beads are called ngira (literally 'path') and their purpose is to separate the triangular shapes. Another informant said that customers usually bring their own beads and request the maker to make a bracelet with a specific pattern. She said that if the maker is skilled enough she should be able to make any patterns requested. This is how women acquire their reputation as beadwork makers. According to this particular informant the patterns may represent various things like birds, houses, etc. Beyond this the patterns have no significance other than aesthetic. The meaning of patterns does not of itself imply that particular motifs and patterns have 'meaning'.

(b) Household Artifacts

Most household objects are simply shaped and left undecorated, except, as discussed in the following chapter on aesthetics, those closely associated with the human body such as men's stools. Some basic shapes of artifacts occur over and over again, which may be entirely coincidental, though it might imply a predilection for certain shapes which the Mijikenda would then be reproducing without conscious choice. An example of this can be seen in the following group of objects: a flask-shaped basket with its ornamented lid, a snuff-container, a mushroom-shaped earplug and a mortar (Fig. 44). The overall shape of the flask-shaped basket resembles that of the snuff-container while the lid of the basket when turned upside down has almost the same form as the typical mushroom-shaped earplugs and the mortar. This sort of similarity in form can be stretched further to incorporate details of the decorations. The flask-shaped basket (B.M. 1953. Af. 25-50; Fig. 44), for example, has fine details of decoration using cowrie shells, cylindrical metal beads and wire on leather. The rectangular areas patterned in this manner resemble rectangular-shaped magical medicine artifacts which are decorated

with similar materials. The circle-on-rectangle form occurs in many objects. This can be seen in another group of four objects; a gouge, a pair of tweezers, a stopper head and a kigango (Fig. 45). This circle-on-rectangle form also occurs in combs and spoons, as already discussed (Figs. 59,60,61,62).

(i) Men's Stools

Men's stools, in contrast to women's, are decorated with excised triangular patterns (Plate: 12; Fig. 1) which are similar to those used on vigango. Sometimes the surface of these three-legged stools are ornamented with aluminium and wire. Leather thongs are attached for carrying purposes.

(ii) Snuff-Containers

Men's snuff-containers are frequently well-made out of aluminium and wood (Fig. 6). The shapes are often flask-like, with projections at the base and wooden sections at the top. Some snuff-containers are made out of antelope horn and are ornamented with inlaid metal such as aluminium or copper, and often with engraved patterns.

(iii) Tweezers

Tweezers are sometimes shaped to have a circle-on-rectangle form (Fig. 5,b,c). Some of these tools have fine engraved cross-hatched lines. The well-patterned types are usually worn dangling from necklaces.

(iv) Baskets

Some baskets, such as winnowing types, are sometimes patterned, but this does not often occur. One of the most elaborately decorated baskets is the one referred to earlier, the portable flask type used for carrying milk.

It appears that utilitarian artifacts which are decorated are those closely associated with the human body and which are carried out of the home and are therefore viewed by other people. The men's stool is a good example of this.

(c) Clay Sculpture

The jangamizi group of clay sculptures appear to be unique to the Mijikenda. There are no existing collections of these sculptures, mainly because they are made and broken during an exorcism ceremony.



The main figure, called jangamizi, is used in conjunction with seven others which represent human figures and animals; these comprise the zikiri maiti, a dead person on a stretcher; the mwanga, an 'ugly-looking' human figure with a jet of flame coming out of the head; the nyagu, a pregnant woman; a dog, a bird and a snake.

The jangamizi is a janus figure, composed of male and female, back to back, and two child-figures attached to the sides of the male and female figures (Plates: 82,85,86). The bisexual figure shares one pair of arms outstretched with the fingers splayed out, and it stands on three legs (Plates: 81). The child-figures are attached below each arm of the male-female. The child-figures each have arms placed at their sides, and legs placed flush together (Plates: 85,86). The female figure has prominent projecting breasts and a conspicuous vagina (Plate: 87). The male figure likewise has a projecting penis (Plate: 88). The child-figures do not exhibit any sexual organs. Each side of the head of the male and female figures has very protuberant ears, and a long well-defined nose (Plate: 81). The eyes are sunken and are marked by maize (Plate: 87). The feet of the sculpture are arranged in such a manner that the two legs project outwards below the female figure and the other projects out below the male figure. The whole figure is finally decorated with red and white spots (Plate: 84,87).

The style of this sculpture is very distinctive. There are no other artifacts in Mijikenda culture which bear any resemblance, in overall form, to the jangamizi, but the head and the treatment of the ears, particularly, and the features do bear similarities to naturalistic carved forms of vidonga (Fig. 56) and vigango (Fig. 58). The use of three legs occurs in other Mijikenda objects, such as in three-legged stools and in the bumbumbu drum.

#### (d) Wooden Sculptures

##### (i) Vidonga

Stoppers for medicine containers can either be simple pieces of wood, rolled up paper, or anything else that serves the purpose. Frequently, however, healers use carved stoppers with naturalistic heads. These are usually used together with constricted ('waisted') calabashes so that the whole looks very much like a human body in outline. The heads of the stoppers are carved with well-defined features

(Fig. 55) though occasionally there are those with more schematic features (Fig. 56). One characteristic of the carving style of these stoppers appears to be the treatment of the ears. Many of the ears are large and protrude forward, and are more or less circular. One stopper carved by a Kauma carver, Nyoka Ngala, in 1984 is very similar to one in the British Museum (B.M. 1915. 7-3. 53; Figs. 29,30,55) and to one in the Kenya National Museum (KNM. UC 1952. 32; Fig. 26). These carved heads, which have great similarity to each other, would seem to indicate a stylistic continuity in the sculptures of the Mijikenda. Apart from resemblance to certain elements in the jangamizi figure, carved stoppers bear likeness to the naturalistic heads of the vigango (Fig. 58).

It could also be noted that mushroom-shaped earplugs bear some similarity in shape to the protuberant ears frequently found on vidonga, vigango and jangamizi.

The features of the stopper heads are modelled to give well-shaped noses, eyebrows and mouth (Fig. 56). The eyes are often made from seeds or maize attached with latex. The hairline is frequently indicated, as is the hair (note the difference between the heads of naturalistic vigango and stoppers: the heads of vigango never have any indication of the hair because they represent luvoo elders whose heads were shaved at their initiation). Occasionally a stopper might have very exaggerated, protruding lips and nose (Figs. 23,24). The heads of the stoppers are carved in such a manner as to leave a long stem below the neck; this stem enters the calabash and helps to weight down the head. The length of the stem corresponds to the height of the calabash.

(ii) Mikoma and Vigango

In contrast to the decorated vigango, mikoma are simple branches of trees which are simply cut and installed; they are not shaped in any way. Replicas of vigango, called vibao, bear the same shape as vigango but are never decorated and are half the size or much smaller than vigango.

The Mijikenda carving style of vigango is distinguished by two distinctive elements; the more schematic two-dimensional and the more naturalistic three-dimensional modes of heads. The body of the sculpture is simply a narrow plank of wood and its surface is covered

in decorations composed of triangular shapes, and sometimes a combination of linear patterns. The distinction of the two types of head styles (i.e. schematic and naturalistic) may possibly relate to the differences between the various Mijikenda groups which make and use these sculptures. Judging from published photographs, a great number of vigango of the Kambe, Ribe, Chonyi, Jibana and Kauma are naturalistic, compared to Giriama ones which are schematic. However, because so many of these commemorative sculptures have been removed from their original setting, it is difficult to say whether this difference in style can be attributed to any one particular group. According to some informants the carving of naturalistic vigango depends, very often, on the ability of a carver, and sometimes on the specific request of the descendant commissioning the work through the ritual elders. However, carvers themselves said that the sculpture need not look like a human being: it does not have to be a perfect likeness of the deceased; the important thing is that it should represent a human being. Therefore, there is no demand or expectation that these sculptures provide anything more than the bare minimum of information needed to enable its recognition as a human figure.

The style of vigango could therefore, be characterized as a schematic form providing the basic minimum needed to enable its recognition as a human form. There seems to be little demand or expectation for anything else. Vigango are carved to have the following distinct parts: the head, the neck, the body, the waist and the feet or legs. In actual fact, they do not have feet or legs, but the section below the waist is referred to as the feet or legs. As stated earlier, the heads are either carved in a naturalistic style or in a schematic manner, in which the heads are essentially flat, a circle or a rectangle and some are oval-shaped. Some heads are often decorated with a coronet of triangles (Plates: 117,124,110; Fig. 41). Sometimes the shoulders are carved in a pointed manner (Plate: 123; Fig. 36,a).

Most of the schematic heads have the following types of features:

1. some have no features at all
2. some have mere suggestions of eyes, mouths (Figs. 36,39)
3. some have triangular eyes and eyebrows (Figs. 37,a,b)

4. some have long slanting eyebrows and slit for mouth (Figs. 40,b)
5. some have circular eyes composed of a set of indented triangles (Fig. 41)
6. some have circular eyes often inlaid with coins (Plates: 118,120)
7. sometimes a face has a more defined nose and slits for eyes, and underneath the eyes a row of triangles (Plate: 121)

The naturalistic heads have well-defined features. Some of the heads are carefully modelled to give a very realistic impression of a human face (Figs. 42,c,43,d). It is worth pointing out stylistic similarities between vigango and vidonga heads. The features of the vidonga are also well-defined and compare well with vigango heads as can be seen in Figs. 57 and 58. In Figure 57 the features of vidonga are shown side by side with those of vigango. In Figure 58 the type of ears on both types of artifacts are shown, and in addition the profiles of the heads can be compared.

An outstanding feature of the vigango is the decoration used to embellish them. The varied layout of the triangular patterns on the vigango demonstrate the extent to which Mijikenda carvers have creatively explored the formal possibilities within, and despite, an apparently limited overall expectation. This probably suggests an aesthetic motivation on the part of the carvers quite distinct from the ritual purpose of the artifact. Although it was earlier pointed out that these sculptures are produced in a strict ritual context, and that it is luvoo elders who carve or commission the carving of them, nevertheless each maker still has the possibility of making something that is different and unique from another, even though the instructions and motifs used are more or less constant. Despite the triangular motif being the predominant one used, no two sculptures (decorated with this motif) are ever the same. The triangular motifs are carved in a variety of ways to produce different effects. In some sculptures a set of triangles are incised very closely together to produce zig-zag lines, the lines varying in width according to the size of the triangle (Plate: 118; Figs. 37,41). In some, the triangles are more separated out (Figs. 36,a,b). In some vigango a combination of zig-zag, semi-circular lines, and triangles are used (Figs. 38,b,40,a). A kigango sometimes has a set of triangles arranged to form a row of diamonds (Plate: 117). The African Heritage gallery in Nairobi has a kigango whose body has

triangles carved in such a manner as to give delicate zig-zag patterns which create an hour-glass effect (Plate: 120). These few examples serve to demonstrate the extent to which the triangular motif can be arranged to give interesting effects.

The patterns are arranged along the sides of the body of the kigango. Sometimes the whole panel is covered with motifs (Plate: 121; Fig. 38), but this is not very common. The torso (i.e. panel) of the kigango is frequently divided into sections by a series of triangles running across its width (Plate: 118; Fig. 41). Often a set of triangles are indented to form a rosette which may indicate the navel (Plate: 126; Fig. 41) and the nipples (Fig. 43,a,b).

The backs of the vigango are decorated with the minimum of patterns (Plates: 106,107,125). The patterns are usually triangular, but sometimes 'crosses' or 'union-jacks' (Plate: 125 for example) are carved in such a manner as to cover the full width of the body; the neck section is left plain.

The 'waist' of a kigango is often indicated by a circle of indented triangles, a rectangular area composed of triangles (Plate: 127), or excised triangles (Plate: 119; Figs. 36,37,38,41). The triangles ('cut-away' as opposed to the incised ones on the main body) are proportionally larger than those used on the body. Some waists are carved in a rectangular manner (Fig. 38 no. KA 1100).

Once a kigango has been carved the body is coated with red ochre and the incisions are filled with white and black colours bound with sheep's fat or euphorbia latex.

In conclusion, Mijikenda art style can be characterised as having at least three components, as follows:

1. There are certain types of artifacts which are characteristic of the Mijikenda: for example (a) vigango, vibao and koma; (b) mushroom-shaped earplugs; (c) jangamizi
2. There are certain forms which are found elsewhere but which in Mijikenda culture are ornamented in a particular manner: for example (a) beaded bracelets; (b) aluminium discs; (c) three-legged stools
3. Decorative patterns which are found throughout the East African coastal region and used in certain limited areas of Mijikenda art.

Mijikenda style cannot, therefore, be regarded as a homogenous

category but rather as composed of several elements, some of which are exclusive and some of which overlap, and some of which are general to the region. At first it seemed as if Mijikenda style was simply a local variant of East African coastal style, but clearly the situation is much more complex. The surprise, given the degree of contact over the centuries, is that Mijikenda art work should remain so distinctive.

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### Chapter Thirteen: Aesthetics and Meaning

It was seen that aesthetics and meaning within Mijikenda culture are located in objects closely associated with the human body. Explicit comments with regard to relevant aesthetic merits of objects were not often made by the Mijikenda, except that some people described some objects as being decorated with 'beautiful patterns' or as 'attractive' things to look at or to adorn the body. In the context of meaning, it is possible to divide Mijikenda artifacts into two categories: those with practical value, such as tools, vigango, etc., and those which are purely decorative, such as earplugs, beaded bracelets, etc.

#### (i) Aesthetics

At what point do the Mijikenda perceive their artifacts as 'art', that is, as products whose over-riding considerations are aesthetic as opposed to their basic practicality? And at what point do practicality and aesthetics merge to give an added dimension to an artifact, outside embellishment specifically aimed at enhancing an object in order to give weight to its ritual context, and thereby convey a definite message? There are ample examples to demonstrate the frequent occurrence of the convergence of aesthetic and 'functional' (instrumental) elements in artifacts which do not require any ornamentation in order to serve their basic purpose. There are Mijikenda artifacts which do not display any visible embellishment: an unembellished form, such as the luvoo bracelet, can acquire aesthetic value arising out of its context of use.

Going through a catalogue of Mijikenda material culture we can mark out those that do not display any form of decoration and whose primary consideration in their manufacture is their practical use and which do not require any additional decorative elements to make them any more 'functional'. Most household artifacts have some patterning of some sort; others have none. A mortar, for example, must be made out of durable wood, must have the correct depth (hollowness) required for pounding and must be perfectly balanced to take an optimum pounding action. The most important factor is

that the structure must be able to withstand repeated pressure exerted on it. If, as is sometimes the case, the mortar is decorated, it is done purely as an enhancement to the form but serves no additional 'useful' purpose except to add visual attractiveness; in this case, this additional attention will undoubtedly enhance the maker's reputation. This example in itself demonstrates that Mijikenda makers are concerned with the question of aesthetics, otherwise utilitarian forms such as this would not be patterned.

A chair or a stool must similarly be constructed with the three factors which applied to the mortar: sturdiness, weight and balance. Skill in their manufacture lies in the maker achieving an accurate positioning of various sections, such as the legs, so that the object can take the weight of the user. Mijikenda portable chairs are never decorated. As far as stools are concerned, they are either plain or patterned. A stool to be used by anyone in the home, or by visitors, is not usually ornamented; the point of interest and detail lies in the overall shape and sometimes in the shapes of the legs. Stools used exclusively by elders, however, are decorated. In addition, they must be light in weight so that they can be carried about. The patterning appears to occur not only because these objects signify the owner's eldership, but because they are carried by the owners to festivities, ritual and ceremonial functions. The purpose of embellishment then is to highlight the importance of the stool as an object of eldership and call attention to the fact. Women's stools, on the other hand are much heavier in weight and undecorated because they never leave the compound. It is said that in the past a bride was given a decorated stool as a wedding gift by her family, but it appears that such stools are no longer made. Such a stool is described as having been 'a very beautiful thing' and that 'it was highly decorated';<sup>1</sup> it is said that the stool served to signify the woman's new status within the community.

In regard to both the men's and women's decorated stools, these belong exclusively to the users, and it is not the accepted practice for other people to sit on them. Their embellishment, and difference in size and weight, serve to delineate the social differentiation of members of the home and community. In this

respect, through aesthetic means, a message is conveyed explicitly so that any comers to a home, and who are, of course, familiar with the cultural norms of the particular community, know immediately which of the artifacts can be freely used and which are restricted to certain persons only.

Containers, such as baskets and calabashes, are usually unpatterned, but some are ornamented. Again, it appears that decorated types are those closely associated with specific functions. In the past, a calabash called ndere used to be carved with engraved motifs and was used as a specific measure for palm wine and grain. Calabashes which are frequently decorated are those called mboko which are used for drinking palm wine. Users pattern their own mboko by burning motifs into the shell. One man told me that he patterned his mboko so that he had something 'attractive' (maridadi) to look at whilst drinking palm wine.<sup>2</sup> Baskets are sometimes ornamented by the use of different weaves and coloured fibre. Basically, however, they have only the patterning of their construction. A type of basket which used to be made for carrying milk, and which can be said to be associated with the human body, was highly embellished. The form was a nicely shaped flask done in twined weave, the surface of which was ornamented with cowrie shells, metal cylindrical beads, copper and brass wire and leather (Figs. 2-4). The lid was equally well-decorated. The attention to decorative detail, and overall shape of the container, indicates an aesthetic motivation. Winnowing baskets (uteo) sometimes display interesting patterns. One of my informants bought me one of these baskets which she had chosen particularly for its brown and cream patterns; as she gave it to me, she remarked that she hoped I would enjoy using it because it had a nice design (urembo).<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes a tool is so well-decorated that it is used as both a tool and an ornament. As an ornament it serves to enhance the body of the person using it. This combination of aesthetic consideration and utilitarian factors can be seen in a pair of tweezers (KNM. UC 1968. 406,394; Fig. 5). One of them has a form (pointed out in an earlier section as resembling a kigango) with a more or less circular section and beneath it a slightly curved 'neck' and below this a horizontal section, and beneath this the prongs. The tweezers are patterned with incised (or engraved) marks.

The Mijikenda, in particular women and female children, adorn their bodies with various ornaments. Attractive objects are used to enhance one's natural beauty (udzo). According to informants, for example, women used to compete to make the most beautiful beaded bracelets, vorodede, which they wore to ceremonies. Sometimes a woman would look so outstanding in her beaded ornaments that other women would turn to each other and ask, in admiration, 'sisters, whose daughter is that?' almost as if they were describing an object.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, one could say that human bodies, adorned with attractive ornaments, are aesthetic objects (i.e. living works of art) which are pleasing to the persons themselves and to those viewing the bodies. The Mijikenda themselves imply this when they participate in intimate activities like hair-plaiting and the massaging of each other's bodies with oil, for example; or by simply spending time on 'decorating' their children with various ornaments. A bride is described as being 'decorated' (kupamba) when she is adorned with the marriage artifacts, such as coiled bracelets, special beads for the hair, special metal necklaces, etc. When women attend ceremonial and festive functions they put on their most attractive clothes and ornaments. At these ceremonies, younger women are often challenged by the older ones to demonstrate their dancing skills; one popular expression is 'come on daughters, show us your bandika',<sup>5</sup> meaning that the women should reveal their traditional skirts hidden under a leso and 'show off' their beauty.

The significance of ritual objects is underlined by their aesthetic elements. There are, however, objects which are not decorated, yet are perceived as having beauty (urembo). One good example of this is the luvoo bracelet which has acquired aesthetic importance, in addition to its ritual value, despite this simple, unpatterned form. The Mijikenda explained that the bracelet is a thing of beauty because it designates a luvoo elder's 'purified' or 'blessed' status.<sup>6</sup> The luvoo bracelet is closely associated with the kigango, which is often referred to as mwenye luvoo ('owner of the luvoo'). The Kigango is offered as a newly decorated body to a deceased luvoo elder's spirit. A well-made, nicely decorated kigango is said to delight and make happy the spirit. As far as patterning is concerned, the kigango is decorated to an extent beyond the ritual necessity. It is not that the patterns do

not have 'meaning', for it appears to be important that it should be decorated because this is a reference to the body painting done on the elder's body at initiation into the luvoo institution. The patterns on the kigango identify the individual kigango with the relevant deceased; at the same time they express the status of the luvoo elder, and are a celebration of the elder's 'youthfulness' (uvulana).

Ritual objects used in spirit possession are decorated and offered to malevolent spirits (mapepo) as a way of persuading them to leave their hosts' bodies. On being offered these attractive ornaments, and in some cases clay sculptures, it is said that these evil, troublesome spirits enter the objects and are driven from the body. 'Spirits of the head' (pepo za kitswa) are offered a series of objects said to be desired by the spirits, and a spirit dance, ngoma za pepo, which provides good rhythmic music to please the spirits and subsequently exorcize them. In these instances, aesthetics serves to enhance the practical value, or efficacy, of objects of cure.

As can be seen from this brief discussion, aesthetics and instrumental ('functional') elements work together in the majority of cases. In as much as observers become participants in the aesthetics of objects, in which they look on and are delighted by the 'beauty' of them, and in some cases become part and parcel of the aesthetics, as in body ornamentation, for example, the makers of these objects have expressed themselves aesthetically and have demonstrated their skills in producing the form and their ability in marrying aesthetics and utility or aesthetics and instrumentality. The makers do not, except in the production of ritual artifacts, work in isolation. From what I could observe in the field, people freely commented about artifacts; for example, when I asked one informant to show me how to make vorodede, the exercise attracted an interested group of both men and women who all commented on the bracelet being made, and on how nice the beads looked. They also talked about the variety of ornaments which used to be made and worn in the past. Kache Mweri, who was making the bracelet, remarked that these days 'there is no more beauty (urembo) left' because, she explained, most of the attractive ornaments had gone out of use and production.

Another area where aesthetic appreciation is evident is in musical performances. These take place predominantly at funeral and commemoration feasts. The songs, dances and music are performed as a way of making the bereaved forget their sorrow. More importantly, however, the songs, dances and music are said to be the favourite ones of the deceased, and are said to distract his or her attention from the fact that he or she died. The music is also said to 'escort' the deceased to his or her new life. At the time of commemoration it is said that the music welcomes the deceased back to the community. Everyone participates in the singing and dancing as a way of 'making the bodies happy', according to several informants.

In conclusion then, aesthetics is located in many objects and in the human body and its embellishment; at times it serves to delineate the status of members of the community, and at times it is crucial in the ritual context where it expresses or conveys particular messages. An important point in the discussion of Mijikenda aesthetic appreciation is that the Mijikenda themselves do not perceive this dimension of their lives as a separate, isolated phenomenon; it is an intrinsic part of their lives.

(ii) Meaning

Meaning is a term of great complexity. It is clear that part of the meaning of many Mijikenda artifacts is aesthetic as already discussed. There is, however, the kind of meaning that is said to be present when one motif, artifact, etc., in some cases stands for something else, whether an idea, a relationship or person. It is clear from our discussions in previous chapters that there are elements of Mijikenda festivities which would appear to represent some 'symbolic' code, for example, the use of cloth with different colours which signify the entry into and passing out of one state to another, and the attainment of a particular status, in an individual's life. In the case of most personal ornaments, there would appear to be nothing by way of a symbolic code, even in the case of the beaded bracelet, despite the suggestions of some people, for example, Jean Brown, who talk of patterns as meaning houses.<sup>7</sup> But the fact that patterns represent certain things does not, in

itself, mean there is a symbolic code; for the motif so named may nevertheless be used in a purely decorative manner. Informants explained that such ornaments are an embellishment for the body. In so far as these objects can be said to have meaning, it is contextual and aesthetic, but not symbolic in the more restricted metaphorical sense.

In regard to vigango, the 'meaning' of each one is very simply that it is a schematic representation of a human being, employed in a certain ritual context in respect of a particular named individual and decorated in a way that is partly representational of the human form, partly representational of the patterns placed on the individual at the time of initiation as a luvoo, and partly aesthetically pleasing. Once again there is no symbolic code. In so far as one might say that the kigango was 'symbolic', it is not so much because of anything by way of form or pattern, except in a very generalized sense, as already discussed, but because of the general and specific context in which each artifact of this type is made and used. Each kigango is the new body of a specific individual, luvoo status, enabled thereby to take his place among his descendants. The meaning of the kigango is therefore, partly to be found in the shape and decorations of the artifact; partly in the ritual context of the manufacture and installation, and especially in the family context - given that the process of setting up a kigango is initiated by the descendants of a deceased known and remembered by name. All of these enable the object to represent a particular individual of a specific status. It is a representation of a particular sequence of events in which claims by the deceased, revealed through dreams and afflictions, are met and resolved by the making of the object, and by the ritual and festival of its installation. Finally it provides a representation of the status system, i.e. political system, by which people acquired authority.

There is also a deeper meaning contained in the word kigango itself. The word is derived from the verb ganga, which means to cure, heal, charm or appease spirits. The prefix ki and the suffix o are added to the word to form the noun kigango which literally means 'something to appease (spirits) with' (Mijikenda language derives nouns from verbs by using the prefix ki and suffix o).<sup>8</sup> According to Parkin (1982, 16) uganga (therapy/medicine) is linked



to this same verb, and to muganga, healer.<sup>9</sup> Apart from marking out the status of the luvoo elder, therefore, the kigango is an instrument by which the descendants can appease their ancestor. The meaning of each kigango, then, is contained in all of these elements.

The luvoo bracelet is an object which has a very definite symbolic content. It is an object that is immediately recognized by the Mijikenda as pertaining to elders of the luvoo status. It signifies that the wearer has undergone ritual 'purification/ blessing' to entitle him to enter the luvoo association. The bracelet and the ritual white, red and black cloths are the material expression of the attainment of that status.

Objects used in healing take several forms. There are those artifacts which are made and used by the healers themselves, and there are those they commission from craftsmen and which they subsequently 'treat' and prescribe to their patients. Carved stoppers (vidonga) are often ordered from craftsmen who are skilled in this work. The stoppers are carved with naturalistic heads and only take on significance beyond the aesthetic when a healer has 'treated' them. Magical ornaments are prescribed in conjunction with other therapeutic courses. The superficial 'meaning' of these magical artifacts, such as the fact that the objects will be used to treat a particular illness or to appease a particular spirit, is known to the wearer, but the 'symbolic meaning' is only known to the healer.

The jangamizi, however, is rather different when we come to consider questions of its aesthetic value and its meaning (in the sense of what the imagery it represents might stand for). The word itself appears to derive from the Swahili word uaangamizi which means 'that which causes ruin or misfortune'. The image is used when young children, particularly newly born, are very sick and on the point of death, when men experience impotence, when women constantly miscarry and when they are sterile. In all these instances, sexuality and procreation are frustrated. The figure itself could be interpreted as representing the mother-father-child relationship as a unity. These afflictions disturb or disorder that unity, either by destroying its procreative result or by preventing the individual from participating in a procreative

relationship.

The jangamizi figure described could, therefore, be said to have at least three kinds of meaning, which are essentially interrelated. Firstly, it has obvious practical value as an instrument of cure. That it can achieve this, however, depends on the other two kinds of meaning. Secondly, it is said to be a pleasing representation of the spirit itself. In that sense it has aesthetic value also at least as far as the spirit is concerned. Thirdly, there is the symbolic context of the imagery itself, for it is clear that it goes beyond the need for an attractive clay receptacle enabling the spirit to be exorcized as the vessel is broken. It has been suggested that the combination of male, female and child images represents a procreative order in which the patient is unable to participate. The rite is intended to restore an ordered procreative relationship to the patient. The image of the spirit is, in that case, also an image of that which the patient has lost, or perhaps never had, and desires to recover or possess. Breaking the image exorcizes the spirit and heals the patient by restoring to him or her that which the image represents.

FOOTNOTES

1. Amina Yeri, 1984.
2. Farm worker at Tony Pape's farm, Kuruwitu, 1984.
3. Asha Nassor, Shariani, 1984.
4. Kache Mweri, Kikambala, 1984.
5. Such an expression is commonly used at funeral and remembrance feasts.
6. Mulai wa Kabao, Toya wa Tsofa, Amina Yeri, Charo wa Mbita, 1984.
7. Jean Brown in Kenya National Museum records.
8. Al-Amin Mazrui, Linguist, personal communication, 1986.
9. Parkin, Speaking of Art: A Giriama Impression, 1982, p.16.

#### Chapter Fourteen: Mijikenda Culture and the Tourist Industry

A pertinent question arises as to whether Mijikenda artifact producers have taken advantage of new markets to earn themselves a living. The most obvious market is the tourist one. Since the coastal region is constantly inundated with tourists from all over the world, the tourist industry offers various opportunities for employment. Outside the context of artifact production, there are many Mijikenda who are employed in various capacities in this industry, such as in hotels where they become waiters, gardeners, managers, etc. What we are concerned with, however, is the specific production of artistic activities by the Mijikenda for tourist consumption.

The objects which are most likely to appeal to art-conscious westerners are the sculptural forms, that is, vigango. These artifacts are circumscribed within a very tightly controlled ritual context which does not easily permit development for an external market. It is significant that the carving of vigango for the tourist trade was initiated by Kamba carvers and only subsequently taken up by Mijikenda carvers who produce typical 'Kamba' tourist art forms. These Mijikenda carvers have chosen to become 'Kamba-type' carvers rather than remain within Mijikenda traditions. In this respect it is worth mentioning that although the Kamba themselves have an indigenous tradition of carving, the production of 'Kamba' tourist art forms is not a development from within that, but a set of forms and styles that are entirely alien to the internal demands and expectations of Kamba culture. The institution of the tourist industry may be something of a historical accident but in sociological terms there is no doubt that its potential for development seems to have been determined by the fact that it did not depend for inspiration upon functional prototypes existing within Kamba culture. In this context, therefore, it is interesting that Mijikenda carvers are, likewise, making use of a set of alien forms (i.e. 'kamba'), totally unrelated to their own traditions, to earn themselves a living.

Certain artifacts which are not circumscribed by ritual considerations are being revived for the tourist market. These are mainly ornaments, baskets, mats and the like.

The fact that certain aspects of Mijikenda traditions can be

adapted for an external market will doubtless ensure their survival - yet such developments are an alienation of Mijikenda people from their culture, for such products are converted into saleable commodities of no intrinsic cultural value to Mijikenda people. It is true to say that anything taken out of its social context, and produced as a saleable commodity for an external patronage, is bound to lack essential meaning for the producers who are no longer consumers of their own products. Such developments are ultimately destructive of a culture's internal coherence and relevance for the people concerned.

(i) Dance

One obvious area in which Mijikenda art may be said to have developed for tourist consumption is dance. The difference between the obvious development of musical performances and the lack of development in the production of artifacts appears to lie in the fact of the much less specific relationship between musical performances and a ritual context. The ritual context of objects such as vigango which, as stated above, have external marketability, limits their production. Musical performances, on the other hand, can be easily performed outside a ritual and social context with little inhibition. Apart from performances of this nature for tourist consumption, songs and dances are performed at the political level. Dance groups (usually termed 'traditional') perform for visiting politicians, Members of Parliament, the President, and so forth, who may come to a particular district to hold a political rally. At the national level, dance troupes participate in national festivities, such as Independence Day celebrations.

Traditional dance performances are also adapted for national music festivals arranged for schools. Within the music festival there is a category of 'traditional music/dance' and schools choose which of the various categories to enter. Those pupils who chose to perform in the 'traditional music/dance' category try as much as possible to have 'authentic' costumes, instruments, songs and music. Pupils are also expected to be creative and original in their adaptation of these 'traditional' songs and dances.

As far as dance activities for tourist consumption are concerned, practically every hotel at the coast has a Mijikenda dance performance at least once a week. In the majority of cases, dance troupes are composed mainly of Giriama people. Some of the hotels have their own Giriama dance troupes, but others hire them from nearby villages. Dance groups have also been set up by enterprising Giriama in their own communities, specifically for tourists or anybody else interested in paying to watch them.

A dance group which performs regularly for tourists, and also for visiting local schools and college parties, is one based at the Gedi Ruins, a historic site not far from Malindi. The dance group is under the auspices of the National Museums of Kenya. It lives in a model village, specifically set up as a demonstration piece for visitors. The houses are built in the traditional fashion, and arranged as they would be in a traditional compound. There is a central house for the elder of the compound. This houses vigango and mikoma and the other houses contain artifacts typical of any Mijikenda home. Within the compound there is an inactive workshop and just outside the compound there is a shrine which demonstrates how offerings used to be made to the ancestors. The whole model village reinforces the idea that Mijikenda culture is a 'thing of the past'. The people have no productive activities to engage in. They are dependent on what they are able to earn from the visitors who pay to watch their 'traditional' dances. The instruments and costumes used for the dances are traditional, but many of the dances have been adapted and are totally removed from their social context, but are usually performed as though they still contained this social aspect.

Another example of a dance troupe specifically developed for tourist consumption is one based at a local restaurant called Porini Village. The restaurant is run and owned by a Seychellois woman who was apparently born and brought up in this particular Mijikenda area. Her late English husband helped her to set up the restaurant which promises 'traditional' African food and entertainment in a 'traditional' setting. The restaurant is built simply as an open-air structure with the main seating areas thatched with palm leaves. The tourists of nearby hotels patronise Porini Village, and appears to be particularly popular with German tourists.<sup>1</sup>

The waitresses of Porini Village are young Mijikenda women dressed in the traditional white marriage skirts (mahando) and printed cotton cloths (leso) tied across the upper section of the body. These waitresses serve the guests in the 'traditional' manner, bringing water in earthenware pots balanced on their heads and empty ones in their right hands. They stop beside each guest, kneel on one knee, put down the water pot, hold out the empty one and ladle water over the hands of the diner who washes them over the empty pot. The water pot is then replaced on the head, the empty one picked up, and the waitress moves to the next diner, who is sitting right next to the previous diner. She repeats the whole performance until all the guests have washed their hands. The food is then brought out in traditional wooden bowls and small earthenware dishes placed on winnowing trays. The diners eat from the pots with their fingers in the 'traditional' manner.

This example of Porini Village serves to show how certain aspects of traditional culture are taken totally out of context and cheapened and abused by their commercialization. In the correct social context, this traditional way of serving was a sign of respect. In this commercial context, it becomes a mockery of a people's culture.

(ii) Tourist Art

At the present time not many Mijikenda engage in the production of Mijikenda or non-Mijikenda forms for the tourist market. What is striking is that it is Kamba carvers and suppliers of 'curio arts' who have come to dominate the coastal area rather than the coastal people themselves. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Kamba carvers have begun to carve vigango for tourist consumption. Of the Mijikenda who have taken up carving for the tourist trade, they have done so via Kamba instruction and then only as a way of supplementing their subsistence activities, so they are not full-time participants in this market. Mijikenda suppliers, i.e. not makers, of what may be termed 'Kamba-tourist' art are few in number. For example, among a group of twenty curio-sellers along Digo Road, one of the main locations of curio-stalls in Mombasa, only three were Mijikenda. Two of the vendors were Kikuyu

and the rest were Kamba. One of the Mijikenda traders had been in the curio trade for over seven years, having started at the age of thirty-three. Another had been in the market for over thirteen years, having started at the age of fourteen; he also works part-time as a driver. These traders said they earned an average income of 500 shillings per month, but that in an exceptionally good season this figure can rise to over 3,000 shillings.

Mijikenda producers of tourist art make artifacts in forms and styles that are recognized as typically 'Kamba-tourist'. Other Mijikenda who have carving skills and could easily enter the tourist market, stated emphatically that 'carving for commercial reasons is not our work but the work of the Kamba and the Makonde'. Some informants said that there used to be a lot more Mijikenda, in particular Giriama, who used to carve for the Europeans, but that these people have since died. Most informants commented that the Kamba are the people who have really 'progressed' in the carving industry. One elder, Mulai wa Kabao, who carves vigango and vibao said that he would never make these artifacts to sell to Europeans. When I asked him if he could carve me a kigango, he immediately asked me whether I had an ancestor to commemorate, and explained that such objects are only made for this particular purposes. My negative answer provoked a question from him: 'why would you want to keep a kigango in your house and you have no ancestor to commemorate?' I explained that I wanted a kigango as a reminder that in the past elders used to be honoured with them. After thinking it over, Mulai said that in that case he might consider making one, but added that this was a strange request. Another elder, Toya wa Tsofa, commented that as far as vigango are concerned

such things are never made to be sold. They are never sold! They are just there, even after people have died they will still be there.<sup>2</sup>

Nyoka Ngala, who used to carve sculptural stoppers (vidonga) explained that

to sell vidonga and vigango is bad; to do so is a great sin. No! No, I cannot make vidonga to sell to Europeans. Never.<sup>3</sup>

In connection with selling ritual objects to Europeans, many informants remarked about the current practice by some unscrupulous



Mijikenda and other curio-dealers of uprooting commemorative sculptures, i.e. vigango and vibao to sell to tourists or to curio-shops. According to the elders, this practice, which they condemn as a gross desecration of ritual traditions, has resulted in these 'greedy' Mijikenda being seized with madness, and in the case of two known cases, death. The elders likened the uprooting of vigango to the act of exhuming bodies, which nobody would dream of doing. Because of the strong beliefs tied to ritual objects, it sometimes happens that Mijikenda people who want to sell vigango guide non-Mijikenda to the location where the sculptures are situated so that they themselves do not directly uproot them. Such thefts have resulted in the exportation of large numbers of vigango to the west, via art galleries in Mombasa and Nairobi.

Where you find Mijikenda carvers producing for the tourist market, they produce on a full-time basis when it is the high tourist season, and part-time when it is the low season. Two Mijikenda sculptors I interviewed produce more or less full-time, working from early morning to early evening when they break off to go and do some cultivating on their farms. Sometimes input depends on the number of orders they have been given by dealers. Carvers are likely to earn a fairly good wage during a high tourist season. The income fluctuates according to demand.

Three carvers I interviewed have a small workshop situated on the main Mombasa-Malindi road. Tourists pass up and down this road practically every day, so there is always the chance of them stopping to buy carvings from this workshop.

(a) Katana Kazungu

Katana Kazungu is about thirty years old (Plate: 131). He had formal schooling up to Standard 7 (the last year of primary school) and was unable to continue with his education due to a lack of school fees. Because he could not find any form of employment, he decided to take up carving specifically to sell to tourists.<sup>6</sup> In 1970, while still living in Vitengeni, he apprenticed himself to an old Giriama man named Chai wa Shutu who in turn had apprenticed himself to a Kamba carver named Mutua. Chai had taken up carving for the tourist market as a way of earning a living. Mutua was still

with Chai when Katana became apprenticed to Chai, but left soon after because he started to steal Chai's and Katana's carvings to sell. Chai taught Katana how to carve typical 'Kamba-tourist' forms Mutua had taught him. He was taught to carve masks by Mutua and it took him three months to master the technique. It took him a month to learn to carve Maasai figures. The carvings produced by Katana were sold and he was given money according to how many had been sold. Having acquired the training, Katana moved to Matsangoni in 1976 where he found himself a plot of land and established a workshop together with another Giriama carver, Kahindi Kaingu.

Since Katana started carving for the tourist industry he has been commissioned to carve six vigango by various dealers. According to him, it takes about a day to carve a kigango and about two hours to carve an item about a foot high. He can shape a mask in about an hour. Katana earns approximately 900 shillings (approximately £45) per month in a good tourist season, but this drops to about 600 shillings in a bad season. He supplements this income with what he gets from his cash crops which he grows on his four and a half acre farm. He supports fourteen people on this income.

(b) Kahindi Kaingu

Kahindi Kaingu is about forty-five years old. He took up carving for the tourist market some ten years ago because, he said, he had had no formal education and could not, therefore, find any employment. Apart from growing cash crops, such as cashewnuts and coconuts, he had no other source of income before he took up sculpting. Kahindi was taught to carve by the same man who taught Katana in Vitengeni. Kahindi was taught to carve masks, Maasai figures, mashetani ('devil' figures), salad sets, walking sticks with animal or human heads and animal figures. It took Kahindi a couple of months to learn to carve a mask, and a year to learn to make Maasai figures. He learned to carve by following marks made by his teacher on the block of wood. His teacher sold his carvings and paid him about 50 shillings every two weeks. After finishing his training, Kahindi moved back to his home in Matsangoni where he and Katana established themselves as carvers.

According to Kahindi, the most popular forms bought by tourists are Maasai and animal figures and masks. Maasai figures are sold

at 50 shillings (approximately £2.50) per pair. The other items are priced according to their height. Since Kahindi took up carving he has been commissioned to carve vigango on four occasions by dealers from Malindi. He sold each kigango for 200 shillings. Kahindi explained that he only carves vigango when he receives an order for them. He has never been commissioned by Mijikenda ritual elders to carve these artifacts because he has not yet attained the right ritual age; according to him he is still a 'child'. (As was pointed out in chapter eleven, only luvoo elders make vigango unless they themselves have no carving skills, in which case they will commission a carver to undertake the job under strict ritual control.) Neither Kahindi nor Katana make any other types of Mijikenda objects to sell as tourist art.

(c) David Libengi

Kahindi and Katana were joined a few years back by a Makonde carver from Mozambique. The carver, David Libengi, came to live in Matsangoni because people allowed him and his Mozambican family the use of land to grow food for themselves. During the high tourist season Libengi carves and sells at his workshop which is located in a village adjacent to Watamu Beach Hotel, patronized by German tourists. During the low tourist season, Libengi carves with Kahindi and Katana in Matsangoni. This is the time when stock is built up in readiness for the high season.

Libengi was born some thirty-nine years ago in Mozambique, and moved to Tanzania in 1958 where he had formal education to Standard 8. He began carving for the tourist trade in 1969 as an apprentice of a Mozambican carver, Mandai Mwingepe, living in Tanzania and who had been carving for many years. It took Libengi a year to complete his training, working each day from about eight in the morning to six in the evening. He was paid about 50 shillings every fortnight by his teacher who sold his carvings. He was taught to carve mashetani and walking sticks with figures. He moved to the Kenya coast in 1978 and started to carve in Malindi from where he later moved to Marani in Kilifi District. From Marani he went to Nairobi and from there to Gilgil, where he stayed at the farm of a well-known Pan-Africanist who helped him to market his carvings. He later moved to the African Cultural Gallery in Nairobi and eventually

returned to the coast where he settled in Watamu and later moved to Matsangoni which is not far from his main workshop. During all his travels he carved and sold his work to galleries and curio-shops. Libengi continues to carve the things he was taught to make, and said he does not carve things like masks because he was never taught to make them. According to him, he earns a good income from his carvings and that in a good season his earnings amount to about 3,000 shillings a month. This figure drops to about 900 shillings in a low season. According to him his carvings are frequently bought by Kamba dealers who come from Mombasa or Malindi.

The case of Libengi has been cited as an example of how a foreigner has been able to establish himself as a carver producing for a market which many Mijikenda carvers could very easily have exploited, but have not. This example, together with the success of the Kamba carvers in the Mijikenda area, not only raises questions about the entrepreneurial motivation of the Mijikenda, but more importantly demonstrates that many Mijikenda artifact producers are still living within a society which imposes certain limitations on them.

#### (d) Kamba Carvers

It seems that the Kamba are very quick to notice and utilize new forms. The ability to do this, means that they take advantage of new forms they encounter and quickly reproduce them or adapt them without fear that there may not be a market for such forms. This has resulted in a great deal of eclectic innovation on the part of the Kamba carvers. One form they have taken advantage of is the kigango. These carvers are now producing a large quantity of vigango at the Kamba carving cooperatives at the coast. For example, in 1984, one of my informants saw a lorry-load of vigango being transported to Mombasa where they were to be shipped to America. The vigango had been made in a carving cooperative in Malindi. As was pointed out in Chapter twelve on style, the Kamba had a tradition of carving before the introduction of tourist art. People used to make very elaborate stools, walking sticks with figurative heads, carved calabashes and gargoyles-like figures, to name but a few. Though the Kamba produce some of these essentially traditional artifacts for their own use and for sale to outsiders, the forms

that are produced as typical tourist art are those that are quite alien to the artistic traditions of the Kamba. Animal figures, for example, would appear not to have been produced before the introduction of tourist art soon after the First World War.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, figures such as soldiers, Maasai, mashetani, makonde, etc, were introduced specifically for an external market,<sup>6</sup> albeit as representing an 'authentic' African tradition of artistic production. In time these forms have come to be seen as the epitome of East African art. Writers and collectors of African art have usually been reluctant to write on or collect this 'tourist art', and East Africa has consequently been perceived, at least until very recently, as devoid of 'authentic' art. Despite the fact that Kamba tourist art is not produced with the aid of mechanical tools, the art is often referred to as 'mass-produced', a term which has helped to lessen the value of the forms.

The Kamba are known today as the most prolific producers and suppliers of tourist art (Plates: 132-139; Fig. 67). Whether or not Mijikenda carvers will earn a reputation such as this, and develop vigango and other Mijikenda artifacts for an external consumption to as significant a degree as have done the Kamba remains to be seen.

FOOTNOTES

1. 'Porini Village' is located at Kikambala. The female dancers of 'Porini Village' are theoretically 'married' to the owner of the restaurant. The owner has paid bridewealth to the parents of the girls as a way of ensuring that the dancers do not run away from 'Porini Village'. Should they do so, their parents will be forced to pay back the bridewealth. This exploitative use of an existing marriage system allows the owner of the restaurant to 'legally' own the girls. Parents are manipulated into this exploitative arrangement purely because of economic hardships.
  2. Toya wa Tsofa, Giriama elder, interviewed on the 19th March 1984.
  3. Nyoka Ngala, Kauma carver, interviewed on the 19th March 1984.
  4. Mulai wa Kabao, Toya wa Tsofa and Kahindi Kaingu, 1984.
  5. Elkan, 'The East African Trade in Wood Carvings', Africa, 1958, pp.314-322.
  6. Elkan, Op.Cit.; Dick-Read, 1964; The Weekly Review (Nairobi), 3rd April 1981.
- . The Kamba carving industry is jointly funded by the European Economic Market, the Kenya External Trade Authority, the Wamunyu Handicrafts Co-operative Society, and the Machakos Integrated Development Programme. Kamba co-operatives are located in Machakos, Wamunyu, Chagamwe (Mombasa) and Malindi. A recently established workshop and gallery is located at Kibwezi, approximately two hundred kilometres from Nairobi.

## CONCLUSION

### Chapter Fifteen: Modernization and Marginalization

Throughout the various chapters a picture emerges of the changes and modifications that have occurred in Mijikenda society and which have given rise to the gradual marginalization, and in some cases the demise, of Mijikenda cultural values and material artifacts. Marginalization manifests itself in various ways, and occurs at two levels, the material and the non-material. Substitution is much more evident at the material than at the non-material level where the changes or modifications may be subtle and not easily noticed. As was pointed out throughout the sections on the production and patronage of artifacts, different types of imported objects are replacing traditional ones, and in some cases the artifacts are obsolescent. In talking of changes that have taken place in communities, it should be noted that not all Mijikenda communities have experienced change at the same pace. The more remote villages, far from urban centres, are not subject to as frequent exposure to imported practices as are those communities closer to the towns.

It appears that throughout the centuries Mijikenda society displayed some resilience to disintegrating effects of major changes, particularly in the colonial period (for which we have more evidence) when alien policies were imposed. The evidence of this resilience is provided by the continuing rituals and production of artifacts, whether linked with these rituals or for purely utilitarian purposes in the home. If the Mijikenda have resisted the erosion of their traditional practices in the areas of ritual observance and healing, for example, why do they seem unable to resist developments that are marginalizing their traditional practices in the post-colonial era?

The pervasive social, economic and political policies necessarily have a marked effect on traditional communities which no longer function as separate, autonomous entities outside the

confines of a centralized government machinery. Greater opportunities have recently opened up for rural communities to develop than were available during the colonial period. One consequence of modern development is the discarding of certain traditional practices by a larger section of rural peoples; particularly those who are able to move out of their rural environment and find employment in the urban centres. People are being exposed more and more to the options available in the post-colonial period. In order to advance development, the government often urges people to discard traditional customs which are seen as a hindrance to such development. In some cases government development projects have been initiated as a way by which rural communities may become more self-sufficient. Appropriate technology is often introduced in an effort to adapt local artifacts into more efficient types.<sup>1</sup> Craft production is also initiated to generate income for the people concerned. The irony, however, is that many of these artifacts are specifically made for an external market, which means that they cease to have value for the producers themselves. Certain activities, such as dance, are taken out of their social contexts and adapted for tourist consumption. A major contradiction exists in this connection whereby local people are permitted to perform for tourists, but are curtailed in their own cultural activities by government restrictions.<sup>2</sup> It is developments of this nature that are bound to have wider implications for traditional communities.

As discussed in Chapter four, many government policies, prohibitions and 'presidential decrees' have a direct, and often devastating, impact on traditional communities.<sup>3</sup> Under these conditions people are no longer in control of their own cultural activities. These government restrictions, often no different from colonial ones, erode the very essence of communities, both materially and spiritually. It is important, therefore, to keep these policies and restrictions in mind when discussing material culture and its marginalization and development.

In Chapter four it is pointed out that modern education has far-reaching implications and consequences for the Mijikenda. The overall educational policy in Kenya has so far continued its colonial orientation in being elitist, and in cultivating values



that are in conflict with traditional institutions and customs. A system has not yet been devised for the harnessing of valuable traditional skills and resources for national development. Instead, modern education promotes a view that regards traditional practices as of little value and western values as being paramount in a modern Kenya. As the educated are alienated more and more from their traditional communities they reject the traditional aspects of these communities. What tends to happen is that a cultural gap is created between the educated and the uneducated members of a community. It is people who have been exposed to modern education who are quick to respond to new options and ideas, and it is they who usually seek employment in the towns.

As far as Mijikenda rural communities are concerned, informants talked about the importance of sending their children to school but complained bitterly that rural families usually do not have the means to pay for this education. Some Mijikenda said that their children have no prospects after their schooling. One man said that in the past children had a purpose in life, that they were taught how to hold a hoe and to cultivate, unlike today's 'stupidity' of sending children to school for 'no good reason'. He said that one sacrifices to send a child to school but that at the end of it all, the child has gained nothing except to be promised something that he or she can never have. He added that it is only the children who go to good schools in the towns who have the advantage of education and employment. Other people were bitter about the fact that the government stipulates there are no school fees to be paid at the primary level, but pointed out that the children are nevertheless expected to contribute to 'building funds' and to other projects which require money which the majority of rural families do not have. Money collected for these funds and projects is often not used for the purposes intended, but is instead appropriated by those collecting it. As a result the contributors and their children suffer. Rural children have a distinct disadvantage in any case since their schools have limited facilities compared to urban schools. Children are expected to sit for the same national examinations which means they are in competition for secondary and university places with children who have the advantage of being in schools with good facilities and teachers. It is not surprising,

therefore, that there is a high percentage of rural school failures. The danger is that once rural children have been exposed to some modern education, with its strong westernising effects, it is difficult for them to fully accept their traditional customs and communities. It is these children who are left in limbo with little purpose in life.

Other than education, Mijikenda communities are affected by government restrictions cited in Chapter four. One of these is the ban on palm wine, long an essential ingredient of Mijikenda recreation and ritual.<sup>4</sup> Palm wine provided school fees in the past since it was traded between the various Mijikenda communities. Now people must apply to the chief of their area for a licence to use it at rites and ceremonies, but are not permitted to drink it or sell it outside the ritual context. Many palm wine tappers have lost their jobs as a consequence. Similarly, within recent years the government, in an effort to stop deforestation, has imposed a ban on tree-cutting of any sort. People are required to apply to their chief for permission to cut down trees or must obtain their wood from licenced dealers. Because of the penalties that might be imposed, certain activities are consequently curtailed. These include woodwork (i.e. sculpting, drum-making, etc) and iron-smithing and pottery which rely on charcoal and firewood respectively. The production of ivory ornaments ceased several years ago after the government imposed a ban on game hunting.

Conversion to Christianity and Islam within recent years by a wider section of the Mijikenda population also has inevitable consequences on traditional practices.<sup>5</sup> Once people convert, they cease to observe certain aspects of Mijikenda culture. People interviewed about reasons for their conversion expressed that they liked the religions they had adopted. One Muslim said he had been 'defeated by the Mijikenda way of life' and had decided to convert to Islam.<sup>6</sup> Others had converted to Islam because of 'spirit possession' which required them to become Muslims. What tends to happen when people convert is that they discard obvious traditional practices which are contrary to their religious beliefs. On the other hand, it often happens that some people who have converted, whether to Christianity or Islam, freely participate in some traditions. Ritual practices, such as the veneration and

commemoration of ancestors is usually rejected by converted Mijikenda. In this instance, the making of commemorative sculptures ceases. As far as traditional healing is concerned, it appears that many more Mijikenda Muslims than Christians continue to practise and participate in it.

How do the Mijikenda themselves perceive the changes that are taking place in their traditional culture? People commented about the inevitability of change. Some elders regretted that many ritual customs have begun to disappear and others have totally been discontinued. Others complained that the modern schooling system taught the younger generation to disrespect their traditions. Most people interviewed felt that the government was not helping them to better their lives, and that they were being denied their traditions at the same time. As far as the production of artifacts is concerned, some informants said that it is expensive to buy materials to make them and that any way these artifacts were 'things of the past'.

Concerning customs, one elder remarked that

the customs have changed a lot and are far removed from the traditional ones. These days, for example, one doesn't have aroni (i.e. traditional marriage proposals). People just walk about, meet each other and get married. Some even get married at dances! The father will be told by his son that he has got married so the father will have to go and discuss mali (i.e. bridewealth) with the girl's father. These days mali is very high, sometimes up to seven thousand shillings, depending on the understanding of the girl's father. Because the girls no longer wear mahando (i.e. traditional marriage skirts) their fathers give them money instead.<sup>7</sup>

Many elders expressed their displeasure at what they termed the promiscuity of today's youth. They said that their behaviour, such as meeting and establishing relationships at dances, was contrary to traditional practice which required a father to first negotiate with the father of a girl his son wished to marry. The present trend can sometimes be a cause of conflict between two families since the girl's family can accuse the boy of ruining the chances of their daughter finding a better suitor, and thus ruining their chances of a better bridewealth. The feelings expressed by some young people interviewed were that they do not believe in many of these old customs.

As far as mortuary and obituary rites are concerned, most

informants said that not many changes have taken place. According to an elder,

mabulu (i.e. commemoration feasts) are the same as those of long ago. There are a few changes such as discos for the young people. These days, though, bereaved women sometimes wear the same type of clothes with the same colours and patterns. They say this is a sign of grief. Long ago there was no grief. People used to be shaved and oil used to be put on their heads. Nowadays castor-oil is rarely used. What is the use of shaving and oiling the head of someone who ties a turban?8

The elder's comment about the shaving and oiling of the head indicates that this ritual has begun to lose its importance. The tradition is that as soon as death occurs the heads of the deceased's relatives are shaved and oiled as a sign of bereavement. The hair is allowed to grow during the mourning period and is cut at the commemoration feast to mark the end of mourning. The fact that women have their heads shaved and oiled but then cover them with turbans means that the ritual significance becomes irrelevant since no one can see the evidence. Most young people refuse to have their heads shaved completely, instead they have it lightly cropped but they refuse to be oiled. The elder's comment about bereaved women wearing the same coloured and patterned clothes as a sign of mourning refers to the fact that it is not customary to show grief at funeral and remembrance feasts. It is believed that to do so is to cause the dead person distress. Happy music, songs and dances are supposed to be performed as a way of 'escorting' the deceased to his or her new home.

In the past, social differentiation was marked out by the use of certain artifacts and by the observance of certain rituals. Many of these, however, are beginning to be disregarded. For example, only status elders were entitled to have their graves completely lined with planks of wood in order to create a kind of coffin. It was forbidden for other members of the community to use such 'coffins'. This is no longer the case. According to a Giriana elder

these days people are buried in coffins if they can afford to buy them. But that coffin was never touched by someone who was not a luvo; he couldn't be buried in a coffin at all. No, never, never!9

Some informants pointed out that some people who are able to afford cement are now beginning to 'modernise' the graves of their relatives by building elaborate slabs over them. In the past graves of ordinary members of the community were marked by sticks or stones. On the other hand, graves of ritual elders were never seen by ordinary members of the community.

In regard to luvoo elders, the few remaining ones are very old. One luvoo elder said that the luvoo institution is about to disappear because

there aren't many people of the luvoo and vaya left. The remaining ones have no work. Things have changed very much. As I told you the other day, how will you pour castor-oil on 'people of the trouser'? They refuse to be oiled. These days if a luvoo elder dies and there aren't members of the luvoo to bury him, others will have to bury him, wouldn't they?<sup>10</sup>

This particular elder explained that in the past ritual elders had a lot of work to do. This included initiating candidates to various ritual grades and performing essential rites of burial, and making or instructing the carving of commemorative sculptures. The burial rites of deceased luvoo elders could only be undertaken by members of this association. Since there are few such elders left, it is obvious, as pointed out by the elder, that ordinary members of the community will have to be responsible for these rites, thus breaking down the social differentiation that existed. In referring to 'people of the trousers' and their reluctance to be oiled, the elder was commenting about modern Mijikenda people who refuse to participate in these rituals which they see as out-moded.

Rituals connected with the commemoration of ancestors continue to be regarded as important by many families. In the case of healing, the belief in the efficacy of traditional medicine is so strong that the practice appears to have a particularly strong foundation. And although there are government clinics within reach of some communities, people continue to consult healers. It is often the case that patients will discontinue treatment at government clinics when they lose faith in the effectiveness of modern medicine. Until very recently, traditional healing was often outlawed by the government, but lately traditional healers have been allowed to practice under licence.

As far as utilitarian artifacts are concerned, some have

diminished in value, others are obsolescent, others have totally disappeared and others have been supplemented by factory-made ones. Some objects continue to be made but may just serve a partial need. For example, in the past every family had one or more mortars, but the availability of packaged flour and access to mechanical mills, limit their use. In this respect, these modern options have been of great benefit to women who were traditionally responsible for the pounding and grinding of flour. Some people said that there is no need to produce local artifacts when they can get others from shops. Some of these factory-made items are considered more durable than locally made ones, and many are bought because they are novel and are aesthetically appealing to people. Because rural communities are in close proximity to urban centres it is not surprising that many modern objects have begun to permeate Mijikenda society. Thus, it is not at all uncommon to see radios, watches, clocks and the like in use in villages. Such objects have become as much a part of the Mijikenda material culture as the more traditional types.

Informants were more or less agreed that the production of local artifacts are not a viable means to an income. One vidonga carver said that he would never teach his children to carve vidonga because such work is

work of long ago. It is not the work of today. I can teach my children carpentry and mechanics, this is good; this is work of today. These days people have become modern. They have left those things of the past.<sup>11</sup>

As the demand for traditional artifacts declines, so too technology disappears. For example, the making of beaded bracelets, vorodede, has practically disappeared. Informants were agreed that at one point almost every family had women capable of making this type of ornament; today the knowledge is no longer passed on by their mothers to their daughters. Similarly, metalworkers used to manufacture a great variety of metal ornaments, such as chains, beads, bracelets, etc, but few people use them nowadays. On the other hand, artifacts like vigango and mikoma continue to be made when the need arises. As discussed in Chapter fourteen they are also being produced by some Kamba and Mijikenda carvers for the tourist market. These commercialized artifacts have, of course, no social or ritual value.

It is inevitable that as more and more foreign practices and artifacts permeate Mijikenda society, major modifications will take place to cope with the demands of urbanization. Writing in 1972, Parkin put forth an important point concerning the changes he observed among the Mijikenda of Kaloleni. He pointed out how they were being drawn into a wider (international) market at the level of agricultural production and how they had to heed political decisions imposed from outside. Thus, he said 'issues of this kind inevitably demonstrate more clearly than ever that ultimate power lies with the central government and the local authorities'. More importantly, Parkin pointed out the inherent contradiction that existed whereby a Mijikenda farmer 'must be seen to defend custom, while at the national level he must be seen to transcend it'.<sup>12</sup> Such contradictions continue to exist today.

In conclusion then, artistic traditions can only survive if there is a demand for them. In the case of ritual objects such as vigango their production will depend on whether a new patronage within Mijikenda society develops. There would seem to be two possibilities for the survival of vigango. The first is if within Mijikenda society new institutions emerge, or the authority of existing institutions are re-defined to compensate for the disappearance of the luvoo eldership; or if the luvoo institution is revived. The kigango is an artifact signifying, among other things, the individual achievement of political authority. In a real sense the competition for authority remains, though drawn on a national rather than a merely local scale, and material artifacts are acquired and manipulated as part of the process. In this context, it is the artifacts of the industrial world that presently count; and questions about the survival value of artifacts, such as vigango, will seem an irrelevance.

FOOTNOTES

1. Appropriate technology usually involves the adaptation of local artifacts in an effort to make them more efficient; these include such things as fuel-saving stoves, water-storage tanks (see Plate: 19), brick-making using various local materials, such as a combination of cement and sisal fibres, clay, etc. Village polytechnics have been set up in some communities and people without, or with partial, education are trained in various skills. In other spheres, people are trained as skilled labourers. See for example, Kenya: The Apprenticeship and Training Scheme for the Printing Trades (The Industrial Training Act) Nairobi, 1968; King, The African Artisan: Education and the Informal Sector in Kenya, 1977. For a general discussion on development projects see also Cochrane, The Cultural Appraisal of Development Projects, 1979; Robertson, A.F. People and the State: An Anthropology of Planned Development, 1984; T. Mboya, 'The Impact of Modern Institutions on the East African', in P.H. Gulliver (ed), Tradition and Transition in East Africa, 1969.
2. The irony is that Kenyan plays, for example, have to be submitted for vetting prior to performance. Other social activities are similarly curtailed. There exists a law of assembly which considers illegal any assembly of more than five people without a licence. See for example, 'No Licence for Musical', Index on Censorship, Vol.12, 1 (Feb), 1983, pp.22-24; 'The Last Rehearsal', Op.Cit., p.24-25.
3. The Chief's Authority Act: An Act of Parliament to make provision in regard to the powers and duties of Chiefs, and to provide for matters incidental thereto. Commencement 24th March 1937; Rev. 1970, Cap. 128: Cap. 97(1948), 12 of 1950, 43 of 1952, L.N. 362/1956, L.N. 172/1960, L.N. 461/1963, L.N. 101/1964, 9 of 1967, 17 of 1967. See also Kenya Gazette (Government Printers, Nairobi) from 1978 to 1981.
4. The 'Presidential Decree' imposed on palm wine may have been motivated by political and economic reasons. It may have been a populist move by the President, it may have had something to do with a need to increase copra production: Any fruit-bearing branch of the coconut palm which is tapped cannot produce coconuts. During the colonial period, prohibitions were set up in an effort to stop palm wine tapping and to increase copra production for overseas markets. See for example, PC/COAST: 1/10/120. 1924-29: Control of Intoxicants Among Natives (Kenya National Archives). One D.C. remarked in 1913 that 'It will not be disputed that the production of copra is far more beneficial to a country and more profitable, in the long run, than the production of 'tembo' (i.e. palm wine).
5. See Sperling, The Study of Islamization Among the Mijikenda of the Coast Region of Southern Kenya, 1865-1930, African History Seminar Paper, SOAS, 1985.
6. Kazungu Yeri, Giriama, Shariani, interviewed, 1984.



7. Mundu wa Muzuka, Jibana, interviewed in Junju on the 5th February 1984.
8. Mundu wa Muzuka, interviewed on the 5th February 1984.
9. Toya wa Tsofa, Giriama, interviewed in Shariani on the 19th March 1984..
10. Mulai wa Kabao, Luvoo elder and carver, Giriama, interviewed in Shariani, 17th March 1984.
11. Nyoka wa Ngala, carver, carpenter, farmer, interviewed in Timboni, 19th March 1984.
12. D. Parkin, Palms, Wine and Witnesses, 1972, p.88.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

(i) Mijikenda Informants

<u>NAME</u>	<u>OCCUPATION</u>	<u>RELIGION</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>GROUP</u>
1. Kalachu Mwinyi	Agricultural Officer/farmer	Christian	54+	Kambe
2. David Matemba Ryanga	Teacher/farmer	Christian	60+	Kambe
3. Katana Nassoro	Farmer/drummer	Traditional	60+	Giriama
4. Charo Chimbuga	Farmer	Traditional	35-40	Chonyi
5. Asha Nassor (F)	Housewife/ farmer	Muslim	36+	Giriama
6. Chizi Kombe (F)	Housewife/ farmer	Traditional	60+	Duruma
7. Kaingu Mundu	Farmer	Traditional	35-40	Jibana
8. Katana Kombe	Farmer	Traditional	60+	Giriama
9. Chengo Yeri	Roadworker/ farmer	Traditional	60+	Giriama
10. Rajisi Kombe	Farmer	Traditional	70+	Giriama
11. Tonya Ngala	Houseworker/ mat-maker	Traditional	35+	Jibana
12. Mundu Muzuka	Farmer	Traditional	70+	Jibana
13. Kingi Masha	Farmer	Muslim	40-50	Giriama
14. Kazungu Yeri	Farmer	Muslim	60+	Giriama
15. Amina Yeri (F)	Farmer/ rope-maker	Muslim	75+	Giriama
16. Mulai Kabao (L)	Carver of Memorials	Traditional	75+	Giriama
17. Toya Tsofa	Farmer	Traditional	75+	Giriama
18. Nyoka Ngala	Carver, carpenter/farmer	Traditional	65+	Kauma
19. Charo Kazungu	Farmer/builder/ healer	Muslim	35+	Giriama
20. Choga Chiringa Gurudu	Farmer	Traditional	35-40	Kambe
21. Mwambere Mbita	Ironsmith	Traditional	70+	Giriama

22. Charo Kabao	Ironsmith	Traditional	55+	Giriama
23. Tete Koi	Ironsmith	Traditional	65+	Giriama
24. Kahindi Kiangu	Carver (tourist art)	Traditional	49+	Giriama
25. Katana Kazungu	Carver (tourist art)	Traditional	29+	Giriama
26. David Libengi	Carver (tourist art)	Christian	37+	Mozambican
27. Karisa Katana	Farmer	Traditional	50+	Giriama
28. Nzaro Gushalo (L)	Farmer	Traditional	75+	Giriama
29. Chea Mucharo	Houseworker/farmer	Traditional	48+	Giriama
30. Charo Dida	Cargo handler	Traditional	50+	Kauma
31. Mwanjale Nduria	<u>Muganga</u>	Traditional	65+	Giriama
32. Mitsanze Mamanga	Carver/farmer	Traditional	60+	Giriama
33. Ali Mramba	Curio-seller	Muslim	40+	Giriama
34. Emmanuel Kubo	Curio-seller	Christian	27+	Giriama
35. Fatuma Abdalla (F)	<u>Muganga</u>	Muslim	35-40	Giriama
36. Salim Abdalla	<u>Muganga</u> /M.O.W. labourer	Muslim	35-40	Rabai
37. Mwamau Hamisi	Apprentice to <u>Muganga</u> /sculptor	Muslim	40-50	Giriama
38. Dama Kibanzu	<u>Muganga</u>	Traditional	40-50	Giriama
39. Gona wa Ngoro	Carver of Memorials	Traditional	80+	Giriama
40. Charo Mbita (L)	Ironsmith	Traditional	75+	Giriama
41. Kache wa Mweri (F)	Housewife/ beadwork maker	Traditional	40+	Giriama
42. Karisa Nyanje	<u>Vifufu</u> maker	Traditional	50+	Giriama
43. Said Abdalla	Carpenter	Muslim	55+	Giriama
44. Mariamu Dida (F)	Housewife/	Muslim	45+	Kauma
45. Peter Kitsao Tuva	Teacher	Christian	35	Giriama
46. Justin Mweri	Driver	Christian	30+	Giriama
47. Andrew Kalama	Cook	Christian	20-25	Giriama
48. Kwai Mamure	Carver of <u>Vigango</u>	Traditional	65+	Giriama
49. Katana wa Vinya	Metal beadmaker	Traditional	?	Giriama
50. Mbita wa Mwayele	Metal chainmaker	Traditional	?	Giriama

NB

F = female; L = Luvoo elder

The informants listed here were the main interviewees. The reason for the preponderance of male informants was due to the fact that women could be interviewed only with the explicit permission of their husbands.

(ii) Kenya National Archives

(a) Annual Reports for 1912-13: Kilifi District

- (i) DC/KF1/3/2: 1899: Rabai Sub-district
- (ii) DC/KF1/3/1: 1913: Giriama District

(b) Kwale District Political Records: 1918-1928

- (i) DC/KWL/3/5: 1918-28, Duruma and Digo Customs: Notes on history of Umba in East Africa, notes on Wa-Duruma and Digo customs, marriage, divorce, inheritance, customs, Duruma headmen, political history, final settlement of Mazrui claims, notes on Wasegeju of Vanga District, vesting of coconut palms in Ngambi, notes on WaDigo.
- (ii) DC/KWL/4/1: Native Tribunal Rules: letters on questions of segregation between black and white in Native District, catechists, grading and pay chiefs and officials, headmen, dowries, products cultivated on alienated land, etc.
- (iii) DC/KWL/4/2: Land Complaints by Natives.

(c) Political Records: Coastal Region

- PC/COAST/1/12/120/1912: Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance 1910.
- PC/COAST/1/12/96: 1913-14: Handing Over Reports, Giriama.
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- PC/COAST/1/10/104: 1914: Murder at Rabai.
- PC/COAST/1/10/175: 1914: Clothing of Natives in Townships.
- PC/COAST/1/9/22: 1914: Giriama Labourers.
- PC/COAST/1/10/120: 1924-29: Control of Intoxicants Among Natives.
- PC/COAST/1/3/66: 1914: Ngoma Permits.
- PC/COAST/1/3/92: 1916: Carts for Giriama.
- PC/COAST/1/3/94: 1915-16: Digo Laws.
- PC/COAST/1/3/103: 1916: Bushfires by Wa-Digo.
- PC/COAST/1/3/114: 1917: Duruma Tribe: Discharge of Arrows at Government.
- PC/COAST/1/3/118: 1918: Segregation of Races Rules.
- PC/COAST/1/3/139: 1917-27: Native Women deserting to marry Mohamedans.

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PC/COAST/1/22/9: 1923: Administration of Giriama.

PC/COAST/1/9/6: 1912: Giriama Labour, Pay and Agreement.

PC/COAST/1/9/6: 1914: Giriama Labourers, Recruitment.

PC/COAST/1/10/6: 1912-15: Tembo Licences and Drinking.

PC/COAST/1/10/11: 1907 and 1908: Native Liquor Ordinance.

(iii) British Museum (Museum of Mankind) Registers

Volume One: 1861-1868, 1903-1907: Nothing on Mijikenda. Some Swahili items.

Volume Two: 1907-1913: East African Protectorate (B.E.A.) pages 1-4, 24-25, 29-30, 44-47, 53, 82, 89, 108, 109-111, 132-133, 149, 172, 188.

Volume Three: 1913-1919: Pages 46, 54-58, 128-134, 142, 144, 156-164, 186, 188, 208, 228-232, 272, 274, 300, 302.

Mombasa: 308; Wanyika: 130; WaGiriama: 130, 230, 232; Swahili: 128.

Volume Four: 1919-1923: Pages 64, 140, 141, 185. Nothing on Mijikenda.

Volume Five: 1923-1926: Pages 185-187, 195. Nothing on Mijikenda. Objects mainly from Nyanza Province and comb from Vanga. Things from Kamba, Kisii, Nandi.

Volume Six: 1926-1928: Pages 2, 7-8, 56, 70, 84, Kamba, Nandi, Lumbwa.

Volume Seven: 1928-1931: Pages 48, 89, 124-5, 129, 157, 188. Nothing on Mijikenda. Nandi and Kamba.

Volume Eight: 1931-1934: Pages 8, 38, 111, 114, 115, 140, 141, 176. Nandi, Kamba, Kikuyu, Kavirondo, Suk. Nothing on Mijikenda.

Volume Nine: 1934-1937: Pages 14, 109-130. Luo and Kamba. Nothing on Mijikenda.

Volume Ten: 1937-1939. Nothing on Mijikenda.

Volume Sixteen: 1950-1956: Swahili: 10; Giriama: 97, 141.

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APPENDIX

(i) Mijikenda Objects in the British Museum

<u>B.M. No.</u>	<u>OBJECT</u>	<u>MATERIALS</u>	<u>MAKER</u>	<u>WHERE</u> <u>ACQUIRED</u>	<u>USE</u>
1. 1908.7-23.89	'Grave slab'	Wood, pigment	Giriama	Kaya Jibana	Memorial post
2. 1908.7-23.90	'Grave slab'	Wood, pigment	Giriama	Kaya Jibana	Memorial post
3. 1908.7-23.91	'Grave slab'	Wood	Giriama	Kaya Chonyi	Memorial post
4. 1908.7-23.92	'Grave slab'	Wood	Giriama	-	Memorial post
5. 1908.7-23.94	Friction drum	Wood, fibre	'Nyika'	'Nyika'	'Mwanza'
6. 1912.6-14.1	Ring	Ivory, horn	'Nyika'	'Nyika'	For finger
7. 1914.4-17.59	Necklace	Brass rings Aloe fibre	Giriama	Rabai	
8. 1914.4-17.60	Reed pipe	Reed, palm leaf	Giriama	Jilore	Musical instrument
9. 1914.4-17.61	Fire-making sticks	Wood	Giriama	-	For making fire
10. 1915.7-3.34	Basket	Palm leaf, fibre	Giriama	-	For keeping flour
11. 1915.7-3.35	Plaited band	Palm leaf	Giriama	-	For making mats
12. 1915.7-3.36	Penamular bracelet	Brass wire	Giriama	-	Worn by women
13. 1915.7-3.37	Anklet	Brass		Swahili	Worn by Giriama women

<u>B.M. No.</u>	<u>OBJECT</u>	<u>MATERIALS</u>	<u>MAKER</u>	<u>WHERE</u> <u>ACQUIRED</u>	<u>USE</u>
14. 1915.7-3.39	Necklace	Copper wire	Giriama	Giriama	Worn by old women
15. 1915.7-3.40	Waist band	Glass beads, hide, bell	Giriama	Giriama	Waist band (bell is bought)
16. 1915.7-3.41 and 42.	Bands	Glass beads, veg fibre	Giriama	Giriama	Arm bands
17. 1915.7-3.43	Roll of fibre	Sansevieria	Giriama	Giriama	To make ropes
18. 1915.7-3.44	Fire stick	Wood	Giriama	Giriama	To make fire
19. 1915.7-3.46	Sword (Mushu)	Iron, wooden handle	Giriama	Giriama	Ornament carried by young men
20. 1915.7-3.47	Sheath	Hide	Giriama	Giriama	For sword
21. 1915.7-3.48	Axe (Tsoka)	Iron, wooden handle	Giriama	Giriama	
22. 1915.7-3.49	Knee-band (Njuga)	Hide, iron	Giriama	Giriama	For dancing Kirao
23. 1915.7-3.50 and 51	Dog-collar	Monkey skin, Borassus palm	Giriama	Giriama	Used in trapping game
24. 1915.7-3.52	Cowbell	Iron, leather	Giriama	Giriama	Worn by leader of herd
25. 1915.7-3.53	Kidonga	Gourd, beads, wood	Giriama	Giriama	Medicine container (with sculpture)
26. 1915.7-3.54 and 55	'Pingu'	Cloth, medicine	Giriama	Giriama	For healing
27. 1915.7-3.58	Doll	Wood, iron	Giriama	Giriama	For bewitching
28. 1915.7-3.59	Bumbumbu	Wood, hide membrane	Giriama	Giriama	3-legged drum

<u>B.M. No.</u>	<u>OBJECT</u>	<u>MATERIALS</u>	<u>MAKER</u>	<u>WHERE ACQUIRED</u>	<u>USE</u>
29. 1915.7-3.60	Drum	Wood, hide membrane	Giriama	Giriama	Music
30. 1952.Af.7.309	Basket	Palm leaf	Rabai	Rabai	For storing flour
31. 1952.Af.7.310	Spatulate spoon	Wood	Giriama	Rabai	Food stirrer
32. 1952.Af.24.50	Milk pot	Plaited grass, cowrie shells, wire, brass	Giriama	Giriama	For storing milk

(ii) Mijikenda Objects Mentioned in Kenya National Archives Records

<u>KNA File No.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>OBJECT</u>	<u>MATERIALS</u>	<u>ORIGIN</u>	<u>USE</u>
1. DC/KFI/3/1	1913	Head ornament	Frayed wood	Giriama	Worn by elders during initiation
2. DC/KFI/3/1	1913	Neck ornament	Iron	Giriama	Worn round neck by elders being initiated
3. DC/KFI/3/1	1913	Ankle bells (njuga)	Iron	Giriama	Worn during initiation dance
4. DC/KFI/3/1	1913	Stave	Wood	Giriama	Carried by elders being initiated
5. DC/KFI/3/1	1913	Goat beard	Goat beards	Giriama	Worn by elders above elbow - for initiation
6. DC/KFI/3/1	1913	Chains (mkufu)	Copper	Giriama	Worn as necklace
7. DC/KFI/3/1	1913	Headdress (kithumbiri)	Ostrich feathers	Giriama	Worn by highest ranking elder

<u>KNA File No.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>OBJECT</u>	<u>MATERIALS</u>	<u>ORIGIN</u>	<u>USE</u>
8. DC/KFI/3/1	1913	Grave posts	Wood	Giriama	To mark graves
9. DC/KWL/3/5	1918-28	Urinda (kilt skirt)	<u>Mkindu</u> leaves	Duruma	Worn for initiation
10. DC/KWL/3/5	1918-28	Rattle	Borassus palm nuts	Duruma	Worn round waist at initiation
11. DC/KWL/3/5	1918-28	Waist band 'mfwihi' nuts		Duruma	Worn during initiation
12. DC/KWL/3/5	1918-28	<u>Mvoo</u> bracelet	Buffalo horn	Duruma	Worn by initiated elders
13. DC/KWL/3/5	1918-28	Headdress	Lion skin, monkey skin		Worn by <u>Vaya</u> elders
14. DC/KWL/3/5	1918-28	<u>Koma</u>	Stones	Duruma + Digo	Marking graves

(iii) Mijikenda Objects in the Kenya National Archives

The Joseph Murumbi Collection: Acquired 1978

<u>Acc No.</u>	<u>NAME OF OBJECT</u>	<u>ETHNIC GROUP</u>
1. M/E/M/47	Aluminium armband	Giriama
2. M/E/M/50	Aluminium bracelet	Giriama
3. M/E/M/52	Wood and aluminium bracelet	Giriama
4. M/E/B/89	Brass anklet/bracelet	Giriama
5. M/B/B/1010	Brass bracelet	Giriama
6. M/I/IV/510	Ivory bracelet	Giriama
7. M/I/IV/511	Ivory bracelet	Giriama
8. M/E/M/1106	Anklets	Giriama
9. M/E/M/1107	Anklets	Giriama
10. M/E/M/1103	Ear ornaments	Giriama
11. M/E/M/1108	Ear ornaments	Giriama
12. M/E/M/1109	Ear ornaments	Giriama
13. M/E/M/1110	Ear ornaments	Giriama



<u>Acc No.</u>	<u>NAME OF OBJECT</u>	<u>ETHNIC GROUP</u>
14. M/E/Misc/854	Gourd container	Kambe
15. M/E/W5/109	Carved gravepost	Giriama
16. M/E/W5/109	Carved gravepost	Giriama
17. M/E/W5/870	Carved gravepost	Giriama
18. M/E/W5/871	Carved gravepost	Giriama
19. M/E/W5/872	Carved gravepost	Giriama
20. M/E/W5/873	Carved gravepost	Giriama

(iv) Mijikenda Trees Commonly Used in Artifact Production

<u>MIJIKENDA</u>	<u>ENGLISH</u>	<u>LATIN</u>
1. Mbambakofi	Teak (?)	Afzelia Quanzensis
2. Mbungati	Sausage tree	Kigelia Pinnata
3. Mgumo	Borassus palm	?
4. Mkonge	Wild aloe, sisal	Sansevieria
5. Mkunguni	?	Terminalia Fatraea
6. Mkwakwa	?	Landolphia Florida
7. Mlala, Mkona, Mkoche	Dwarf palm	Hyphaene Coriacea, H. Crinita
8. Mng'ambo	?	?
9. Mpingo	Ebony	Diospyros Ebenum
10. Mtoria	Rubber tree	Landolphia Petersiana
11. Muhuhu	Mahogany	Brachylaena Hutchinsii
12. Muhumba	?	?
13. Muia	Mangrove	Bruguiera Gymnorhiza
14. Mukindu	Wild date palm	Phoenix Reclinata
15. Mukoma	Vegetable ivory	Hyphaene Thebaica
16. Mukone	Wild fig	?
17. Murihi	?	Brachystegia Edulis
18. Musinga	?	Trema Guineensis
19. Muwale	Raphia palm	Raphia Monbuttorum
20. Muyu (mbuyu)	Baobab	Adansonia Digitata
21. Tola	Camwood (?)	?

(v) Terms Used in Reference to Artifact Production

<u>TERM</u>	<u>MEANING</u>
1. Kuangiza, Kuvwika	to dye
2. Kuaka	to build
3. Kudzalula urembo	to ornament oneself
4. Kudzora	to engrave, to carve, by way of ornament
5. Kufuma	to weave
6. Kuhalaza	to spin thread
7. Kuhenda bato	to make a mark, a spot, a dot
8. Kuhenda t'ambo t'ambo	to knot in plaits, ornamentally
9. Kuhunga	to string beads
10. Kuiza	to melt brass, etc
11. Kupeketsa tundu	to bore a hole
12. Kupeketsa	to use an awl, to make marks with an awl
13. Kupiga murira	to make a line by dragging a stick along the ground
14. Kupiga m'sasa	to rub smooth with the leaf of the sandpaper tree
15. Kusana	to forge
16. Kusara	to smear, to rub over with oil, to anoint
17. Kusesera	to draw a line on the ground with the foot
18. Kusuka	to plait
19. Kutasa	to rub oneself with oil
20. Kutsikitsa muhaso	to rub colouring matter into cicatrized marks
21. Kutsodza/kutsoga	to cicatrize
22. Kutsonga	to do carpentry
23. Kuvaka	to smear, to anoint the body with substance
24. Kuvumba lwavuni	to thatch a building
25. Fundi	one who is skilled
26. Muumbi	potter
27. Mugema	palm wine tapper
28. Musana	ironsmith
29. Urembo	ornament, beautiful
30. Utana/udzo	beauty

(vi) Names of Mijikenda Artifacts: Dialect Variations

NB: Where plural forms are different they are listed below the singular

<u>OBJECT</u>	<u>COMMONLY USED</u>									
	<u>GIRIAMA</u>	<u>DIGO</u>	<u>DURUMA</u>	<u>KAMBE</u>	<u>JIBANA</u>	<u>CHONYI</u>	<u>KAUMA</u>	<u>RIBE</u>	<u>RABAI</u>	<u>PLURALS</u>
3-legged stool	Kihi	Chihi	Chihi	Chihi	Chihi	Chihi	Chihi	Chihi	Chihi	Vihi
Bed with woven top	Uriri	Litsaga Tsaga	Uriri	Uriri	Uriri	Uriri Mariri	Uriri Mariri	Uriri	Uriri	Riri
Pestle	Mutsi	Mutsi	Mutsi	Mutsi	Mutsi	Mutsi	Mutsi	Mutsi	Mutsi	Mitsi
Axe	Kitsoke	Shoka	Kitsoke	Katsoka	Kitsoke	Katsoka	Kitsoke	Kitsoke	Tsoka	Vitsoka
Adze	Thezo	Tezo	Tezo	Tezo	Tezo	Tezo	Tezo	Tezo	Tsedzo	Tezo
Wooden bowl	Muvure	Muvure	Muvure	Muvure	Muvure	Muvure	Muvure	Muvure	Muvure	Mivure
Clay water pot	Biga	Finikiro Mafinikiro	Finikiro Mafinikiro	Nziro	Finikiro Mafinikiro	Finikiro Mafinikiro	Biga	Nziro	Finikiro Mafinikiro	
Clay cooking pot	Nyungu	Nyungu	Nyungu	Nyungu	Nyungu	Nyungu	Nyungu	Nyungu	Nyungu	Nyungu
Clay relish pot	Kibungu Vibunguu	Liga Biga	Liga Biga	Lwaya Nyaya	Lwiga Nyiga	Lwiga Nyiga	Lwiga Nyiga	Lwaya Nyaya	Lwiga Nyiga	Vibunguu
Calabash for palm wine	Kadzama	Kadzama	Kadzama	Kadzama	Kadzama	Kadzama	Kadzama	Kadzama	Kadzama	Kadzama

<u>OBJECT</u>	<u>GIRIAMA</u>	<u>DIGO</u>	<u>DURUMA</u>	<u>KAMBE</u>	<u>JIBANA</u>	<u>CHONYI</u>	<u>KAUMA</u>	<u>RIBE</u>	<u>RABAI</u>	<u>PLURALS</u>
Drinking calabash for palm wine	Mboko	Kasi	Mboko	Mboko	Mboko	Mboko	Mboko	Mboko	Mboko	Mboko
Drinking reed with filter	Muridza	Muridza	Muridza	Muridza	Muridza	Muridza	Muridza	Muridza	Muridza	Muridza
Basket	Kikahana	Chikaphu Vikaphu	Kaphu	Chikahana	Chikahana	Kikahana	Kikahana	Chikahana	Chikahana	Vikahana
Coconut or Baobab shell for milking	Tuguu	Tuguu	Tuguu	Tuguu	Tuguu	Tuguu	Tuguu	Tuguu	Tuguu	Matuguu
Winnowing basket	Lungo	Lungo Malungo	Lungo	Lungo	Lungo	Lungo	Lungo	Lungo	Lungo	Nyungo
Plaited mat	Kitseka	Mcheke Micheke	Kuchi Makuchi	Chitseka	Chitseka	Chitseka	Chitseka	Chitseka	Chitseka	Vitseka
Clay pot for cooking vegetables	Kikalango	Chikalango	Chikalango	Chikalango	Chikalango	Chikalango	Chikalango	Chikalango	Chikalango	Vikalango
Forked stick for stirring	Lufudzo	Lifidzo	Ufidzo Vifidzo	Lufidzo	Lufidzo	Lufidzo	Lufidzo	Lufidzo	Lufidzo	Fidzo

[illegible]

<u>OBJECT</u>	<u>COMMONLY USED</u>									
	<u>GIRIAMA</u>	<u>DIGO</u>	<u>DURUMA</u>	<u>KAMBE</u>	<u>JIBANA</u>	<u>CHONYI</u>	<u>KAUMA</u>	<u>RIBE</u>	<u>RABAI</u>	<u>PLURALS</u>
Pleated + gathered white skirt	Hando	Chituku Vituku	Chituku	Hando	Hando	Hando	Hando	Hando	Hando	Mahando
Pleated + gathered coloured skirt	Bandika	Chituku Vituku	Bandika	Bandika	Bandika	Bandika	Bandika	Bandika	Bandika	Mabandika
Pleated + gathered blue skirt	Musimbiji	Nguo ya Mulungu	Nguo ya Mulungu	Musimbiji	Musimbiji	Musimbiji	Musimbiji	Musimbiji	Musimbiji	Misimbiji
Black cloth	Kithambi	Chitambi	Chitambi	Chitambi	Chitambi	Chitambi	Chitambi	Chitambi	Chitambi	Vitambi
Type of cloth	Kadzilibai	Kadzilibai	Kadzilibai	Kadzilibai	Kadzilibai	Kadzilibai	Kadzilibai	Kadzilibai	Kadzilibai	Kadzilibai
Indigo-dyed cloth	Kaniki	Gushe Magushe	Bui Mabui	Kaniki	Kaniki	Kaniki	Kaniki	Kaniki	Kaniki	Kaniki
Metal beads	Ndhale	Useja Miseja	Ndale	Ndale	Ndale	Ndale	Ndale	Ndale	Ndale	Ndale
Metal chain necklace	Mukufu	Mukufu	Mukufu	Mukufu	Mukufu	Mukufu	Mukufu	Mukufu	Mukufu	Mikufu
Metal arm coils	Tsango	Tsango	Dzango Madzango	Tsango	Tsango	Tsango	Tsango	Tsango	Tsango	Matsango

[illegible]

<u>OBJECT</u>	<u>GIRIAMA</u>	<u>DIGO</u>	<u>DURUMA</u>	<u>KAMBE</u>	<u>JABANA</u>	<u>CHONYI</u>	<u>KAUMA</u>	<u>RIBE</u>	<u>RABAI</u>	<u>PLURALS</u>
Facetted aluminium bracelet	Muthirima	Mutirima	Mitirima	Mitirima	Mitirima	Mitirima	Mitirima	Mitirima	Mitirima	Mithirima
Aluminium armlet	Kidanga	Chikuku Vikuku	Chidanga	Chidanga	Chidanga	Chidanga	Chidanga	Chidanga	Chidanga	Vidanga
Iron wristlet	Mukorongo	Mukorongo	Chikorongo	Chirongo	Chirongo	Mukorongo	Chikorongo	Chikorongo	Chikorongo	Mikorongo
Open-work bead necklace	Kirangi	Kirangi	Chirangi	Chirangi	Chirangi	Chirangi	Chirangi	Chirangi	Chirangi	Virangi
Aluminium disc	Mweri	Mweri	Mweri	Mweri	Mweri	Mweri	Mweri	Mweri	Mweri	Mieri
Magical medicine ornament	Kivele	Chiphele Viphele	Chivele	Chivele	Chivele	Chivele	Chivele	Chivele	Chivele	Vivele
Divining calabash	Kidonga	Ndonga	Chidonga	Chidonga	Chidonga	Chidonga	Chidonga	Chidonga	Chidonga	Vidonga
Magical medicine	Pengu	Pingu	Pingu	Pengu	Pengu	Pengu	Pengu	Pengu	Pengu	Pengu



[illegible]

A SOCIO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE ART AND MATERIAL  
CULTURE OF THE MIJIKENDA OF KENYA

Elizabeth C. Orchardson

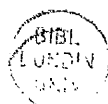
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ABSTRACT

The Mijikenda peoples inhabit the coastal hinterland of Kenya. They comprise of nine subgroups of closely related people who speak mutually intelligible dialects of the Northcoast Bantu. The nine subgroups share a common history of origins and common social, cultural, economic and political institutions.

The thesis begins with an outline of the history and ethnography of the Mijikenda to the present day. This provides the basis for discussion of how the manufacture of the art and artifacts are linked to social, ritual and political institutions, and how they have been modified through the colonial and post-colonial periods. Particular attention is given to sculptures in wood and in clay that are part of ritual contexts. Problems of style, aesthetics and meaning are also discussed. Finally the present state of these arts is considered and the extent to which Mijikenda artists have begun to produce for an external patronage.

## LIST OF FIGURES

Abbreviations: B.M. = British Museum; KNM: Kenya National Museum;  
NCS = Nairobi Curio Stalls

### a. Map of Areas of Field Research

## HOUSEHOLD ARTIFACTS

- Figs. 1. Three-legged stool with incised patterns. KNM: UC 1969. 46.
2. Grass twined basket container. B.M. 1953. Af. 24-50.
3. Basket, detail of decorations. B.M. 1953. Af. 24-50.
4. Basket, detail of lid and decorations. B.M. 1953. Af. 24-50.
5. Gouge, (a) KNM: UC 1969. 47, and tweezers, (b) KNM: UC 1968. 406; (c) KNM: UC 1968. 394.
6. Snuff containers. KNM: UC 1969. 88a and b.

## ORNAMENTS

7. Vorodede, beaded bracelet, technique: Steps 1-4.
8. Vorodede, technique: Steps 5-8.
9. Duruma aluminium earplugs, (a) KNM: UC 1968. 366A; (b) KNM: UC 1968. 366B; (c) KNM: UC 1968. 365; (d) KNM: UC 1968. 366C; (e) KNM: UC 1968. 386A.
10. Duruma aluminium earplugs, (a) KNM: UC 1968. 385a; (b) KNM: UC 1968. 385b; (c) KNM: UC 1968. 385d.
11. Giriama aluminium earplugs, (a) KNM: UC 1969. 57a; (b) KNM: UC 1969. 58; (c) KNM: UC 1969. 57b.
12. Giriama aluminium earplugs, (a) NCS 1985. V.1; (b) NCS 1985. V.2; (c) NCS 1985. V.3; (d) NCS 1985. V.4.
13. Wooden earplugs with incised patterns, (a) KNM: UC 1969. 60a,b, and plain maize stalk earplugs, (b) KNM: UC 1969. 59.
14. Aluminium discs, (a) KNM: UC 1968. 423; (b) KNM: UC 1968. 423B; (c) KNM: UC 1968. 387.
15. Aluminium discs, (a) NCS 1985. M.1.a,b; (b) NCS 1985. M.2,a,b.
16. Duruma aluminium octagonal bracelet, details of

- decorations, KNM: UC 1968. 413.
17. Brass anklet, B.M. 1915. 7-3. 37.
  18. Brass bracelet, B.M. 1915. 7-3. 36.
  19. Copper and brass bracelet, (a) NCS 1985. B.1. and solid brass bracelet, (b) NCS 1985. B.2; flat brass bracelet, (c) NCS 1985. B.3; (c) NCS 1985. B.4.
  20. Copper wire necklace. B.M. 1915. 7-3. 39.

#### HEALING

21. Bracelet used to appease Arab Spirits:
  - No. 1. Copper bracelet for Barawa Spirit
  - No. 2. Copper bracelet for Pemba Spirit
  - No. 3. Copper bracelet for Barawa and Pemba Spirit
  - No. 4. Copper and iron bracelet for Mshihiri Spirit
  - No. 5. Motif used on white metal bracelet for Pepo Spirit.
22. Magical Medicine, (a) B.M. 1915. 7-3. 54; (b) B.M. 1915. 7-3. 55; (c) KNM: UC 1968. 403; (d) wooden objects used for appeasing spirits (worn by Fatuma Abdalla 1985)
23. Giriama sculptural stopper. KNM: UC 1952. 44E.
24. Digo sculptural stopper and gourd. KNM: UC 1952. 41.
25. Digo sculptural stopper, profiles of head. KNM: UC 1952. 41.
26. Giriama sculptural stopper and gourd. KNM: UC 1952. 32.
27. Giriama sculptural stopper, profiles of head. KNM: UC 1952. 32.
28. Sculptural stopper, drawn from cover of African Arts, Autumn 1972.
29. Giriama sculptural stopper and gourd. B.M. 1915. 7-3. 53.
30. Sculptural stopper by Kauma carver, Nyoka Ngala, 1984.
31. Copy of drawing for healing as done by Mwamau Hamisi, Shariani, 1984.
32. Articulated wooden doll used to 'bewitch', B.M. 1915. 7-3. 58.

MIKOMA

- Figs. 33. Vibao and Mikoma at Mulai wa Kabao's home, 1984.  
34. Vibao and Mikoma with representational colours, 1984.  
35. Vibao and Mikoma at Mulai's home, 1984.

VIGANGO

36. Vigango at African Heritage, KA 1150 a,b,c.  
37. Vigango at African Heritage, KA 1200 a,b,c.  
38. Vigango at African Heritage, KA 1250 a,b.  
39. Vigango at African Heritage, KA 1100 and KA 1250.  
40. Vigango at African Heritage, KA 1500 and KA 1400c.  
41. Vigango drawn from photographs in Ernie Wolfe: 1979, p.30.  
42. Ribe naturalistic heads of Vigango, (a) Ribe (Brown 1980, p.37); (b) Ribe (Brown 1980, p.38); (c) Ribe (Adamson 1957, p.255) and one schematic (Adamson 1957, p.255).  
43. Kambe Vigango, naturalistic heads, (a) Brown 1980, p.36; (b) Brown 1980, p.39; (c) Brown 1980, p.39; (d) Siroto 1979, p.109.

MIJIKENDA STYLE

44. Various objects showing similarities in overall shape, (a) Basket, B.M. 1953. Af. 25-50; (b) Snuff-container, KNM: UC 1969. 88b; (c) Lid of basket, B.M. 1953. Af. 25-50; (d) Earplug, KNM: UC 1968. 386A, (e) Earplug, KNM. UC 1969. 57a; (f) Mortar.  
45. Various objects showing similarities in overall shape, (a) Gouge, KNM: UC 1969. 47; (b) Tweezers, KNM: UC 1968. 406; (c) Stopper, KNM: UC 1952. 32; (d) Kigango.  
46. Kigango (drawn from Siroto 1979, p.107) and stopper, B.M. 1915. 7-3. 53. Similarity of form.  
47. Styles of earplugs, (a) KNM: UC 1968. 366a,b; (b) KNM: UC 1968. 365; (c) KNM: UC 1968. 366c; (d) KNM: UC 1968. 385d; (e) KNM: UC 1968. 386a; (f) NCS 1985. V.1. (g) KNM: UC 1969. 60a.  
48. Patterns on earplugs, (a) NCS 1985. V.1. (b) NCS 1985. V.2. (c) NCS 1985. V.3. (d) NCS 1985. V.4.  
49. Patterns on aluminium clasps, (a) KNM: UC 1969. 7a,b; (b) KNM: UC 1969. 53a,b.

- Figs. 50. Patterns on aluminium discs and earplugs, (a) NCS 1985. M.2.a; (b) NCS 1985, M.2.b; (c) KNM: UC 1968. 423; (d) KNM: UC 1968. 423B; (e) KNM: UC 1968. 387; (f) NCS 1985. V.4.
51. Patterns on various objects, (a) NCS 1985. M.1.a; (b) NCS 1985. M.1.b; (c) KNM: UC 1969. 46; (d) KNM: UC 1968. 358b; (e) NCS 1985. V.1; (f) NCS 1985. V.3.
52. Motifs used by Mijikenda and common to Indian, Boni, Swahili and Nubian cultures.
53. Group of Bajun, Boni and Swahili objects alongside Mijikenda Vigango, (a) Kambe Kigango; (b) Bajun lid; (c) Kauma Kigango; (d) Kauma Kigango; (e) Swahili Koran stand; (f) Boni comb.
54. Swahili, Boni and Bajun patterns alongside patterns on Vigango, (a) Swahili doors; (b) Boni patterns on comb; (c) Bajun patterns on wooden paddle; (d) Kigango (Wolfe 1979, p.32); (e) Kigango (Adamson 1967, p.297); (f) Kigango (Adamson 1967, p.216).
55. Stoppers, (a) KNM: UC 1952. 41; (b) KNM: UC 1952. 44E.
56. Stoppers: types of ears, (a) KNM: UC 1952. 32; (b) B.M. 1915. 7-3. 53; (c) Nyoka Ngala's stopper, 1984.
57. Stoppers and Vigango: Comparison of heads, (a) KNM: UC 1952. 32; (b) Nyoka Ngala 1984; (c) B.M. 1915. 7-3. 53; (d) Kambe Kigango; (e) Kambe Kigango; (f) Kambe Kigango; (g) Jibana Kigango.
58. Stoppers and Vigango: Comparison of heads, (a) KNM: UC 1952. 41; (b) Kambe Kigango; (c) KNM: UC 1952. 32; (d) Kambe Kigango; (e) B.M. 1915. 7-3. 53; (f) Kambe Kigango; (g) Nyoka Ngala, 1984; (h) Kigango.

#### BAJUN AND BONI ARTIFACTS

59. Bajun: KNM: UC 1969. 1677a: Wooden paddle with incised patterns.
60. Boni: KNM: UN 1971. 1021b, 1021c: Combs with incised patterns.
61. Boni: KNM: UN 1971. 1019d: Combs with incised patterns.
62. Boni: Spoons with incised patterns, 1985.
63. Bajun mortar lid (Bravmann 1983, p.111) and Koran stand (Bravmann 1983, p.111).

KAMBA STYLE

- Figs. 64. Kamba 3-legged stools, (a) B.M. 1971. Af. 13-5; (b) B.M. 1940. Af. 11-19.
65. Kamba 3-legged stools, (a) B.M. 1947. Af. 16-242; (b) B.M. 1947. Af. 16-5.
66. Motifs on Kamba stools, (a) B.M. 1947. Af. 16-6; (b) B.M. 1947. Af. 16-5; (c) B.M. 1947. Af. 16-3.
67. Kamba carving (wooden sculptures), (a) B.M. 1933. 11-22. 9; (b) B.M. 1933. 11-22. 5.



## LIST OF PLATES

### HOUSING

1. Typical Mijikenda vegetation. Maize and coconut palms, 1984.
2. Traditional. Gedi Ruins, 1984.
3. Traditional and rectangular houses. Junju, 1984.
4. Duruma homes. Kaloleni, 1982.
5. Mulai wa Kabao's home. Shariani, 1984.
6. White-washed house. Ribe, 1982.
7. Plaited palm leaf screen. Kaloleni, 1982.
8. Detail of plaited screen.
9. Granary under construction. Thatched with palm leaves. Timboni, 1984.

### HOUSEHOLD ARTIFACTS

10. Mortar, pottery vessel, wooden bowl. Shariani, 1984.
11. 3-legged stools. Decorated one is man's, plain is woman's. 1985.
12. Detail of pattern on man's 3-legged stool. Shariani, 1985.
13. Spoons, ladles, waterpot. Kikambala, 1985.
14. Mweri Ngwaru plaiting palm leaf strip for basket. Kikambala, 1984.
15. Plaited palm leaf strip being sewn to make a mat. Shariani, 1984.
16. Muganga's basket. Timboni, 1984.
17. Grass twined basket. B.M. 1953. Af. 50. Height: 15ins.
18. Earthenware waterpot. Aluminium cover and plastic mug. Kikambala, 1984.
19. Cement water-storage pot with pipe and tap. Shariani, 1985.
20. Woodworking tools. Mida, 1985.
21. Woodworking tool. Mida, 1985.
22. Lwalwa, grindingstone. Shariani, 1985.
23. Lwalwa, rotary quern, made from sandstone. Shariani, 1985.
24. Lwalwa. 1985.
25. Lwalwa, upper and lower stones. 1985.
26. Lwalwa, upper and lower stones. 1985.

27. Double-edged iron sword. B.M. 1915. 7-3. 46. Length: 25.5ins. Scabbard, B.M. 1915. 7-3. 47. Length: 22ins.

#### ORNAMENTS

28. Kache Mweri making vorodede, beaded bracelet, Kikambala, 1985.
29. Two rows of beads with warp threads entered.
30. Rows of beads pushed together.
31. Four completed rows and next row ready to receive warp threads.
32. Vorodede (a) KNM: UC 1969. 327E:  $7\frac{1}{2}$ ins x 1ins.  
(b) KNM: UC 1969. 327a:  $8\frac{1}{4}$ ins x 2ins.
33. Vorodede (a) KNM: UC 1969. 62: 8ins x 2ins.  
(b) KNM: UC 1969. 64: 8ins x 2ins.
34. Vorodede (a) KNM: UC 1969. 65a:  $7\frac{3}{4}$ ins x  $1\frac{3}{4}$ ins.  
(b) KNM: UC 1969. 64b: 8ins x 2ins.  
(c) KNM: UC 1970. 32c:  $8\frac{1}{4}$ ins x 2ins.
35. Vorodede (a) KNM: UC 1968. 355: 9ins x  $1\frac{3}{4}$ ins.  
(b) KNM: UC 1968. 353A:  $7\frac{1}{2}$ ins x  $1\frac{3}{4}$ ins.  
(c) KNM: UC 1968. 360A:  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ins x 1ins.  
(d) KNM: UC 1968. 358: 5ins x 1ins.  
(e) KNM: UC 1968. 359B:  $5\frac{3}{4}$ ins x 1ins.
36. Kisara-sara, bead necklace worn by old women for dancing at ceremonial occasions. Also used for burial. KNM: UC 1969. 66A:  $8\frac{1}{2}$ ins x 2ins.
37. Kipote-pote, openwork bead necklace worn by young women as ornament and on ceremonial occasions. Fringed with 104 coins. KNM: UC 1968. 68.
38. Kivele (a) KNM: UC 1968. 403. Coiled wire and cowrie shells sewn on leather. Used as protection against evil medicine.  
(b) Ndore, KNM: UC 1969. 83. Heavy brass beads threaded into bride's hair.  
(c) Kirangi, KNM: UC 1968. 391: 14ins x  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ins. Fine brass chain looped through sisal thread. Worn by women as ornament.

39. Vifufu, (Duruma) earplugs (a) KNM: UC 1968. 385b: 2ins long.  
(b) KNM: UC 1968. 385: 3ins long.  
(c) KNM: UC 1968. 385d: 2½ins long.
- Mweri, aluminium discs (a) KNM: UC 1968. 423. Diam: 2¾ins.  
(b) KNM: UC 1968. 387. Diam: 2ins.  
(c) KNM: UC 1968. 423B. Diam: 2½ins.
40. Vifufu (Giriama) (a) KNM: UC 1969. 57A: 2ins long, diam: 1½ins.  
(b) KNM: UC 1969. 57B: 1ins long, diam: 1½ins.  
(c) KNM: UC 1969. 58: 1¾ins long, diam: 1½ins.  
(d) KNM: UC 1969. 58B: 1¾ins long, diam: 1½ins.
- Mikufu, chainnecklaces with aluminium clasps  
(e) KNM: UC 1969. 71.  
(f) KNM: UC 1969. 53.
41. Kidanga, aluminium octagonal bracelet worn by women as ornament (g) KNM: UC 1968. 413. Diam: 3ins.
42. Ivory bracelet in sections, fastened with ebony pins  
(a) KNM: UC 1943. 15. Diam: 4ins.  
(b) KNM: UC 1943. 14. Diam: 5¼ins.
43. Ivory bracelets. KNM: UC 1943. 15 and KNM: UC 1943. 14.

#### GARMENTS

44. Strips of leso cloth looped over string to make bandika skirt, 1985.
45. Bandika (coloured) and hando (white) skirts. Shariani, 1984.
46. Boy in shuka (waistcloth) and girl in hando and leso (printed). Shariani, 1984.
47. Leso cloth criss-crossed and tied at neck. Shariani, 1984.
48. Duruma woman in leso and beaded ornaments, and twisted hairstyle. 1982.

#### MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

49. Bumbumbu drums (single-membrane), 3 legs. Gedi Ruins, 1984.
50. Chapuo (double-membrane) and bumbumbu used for ngoma za pepo. Timboni, 1984.
51. Bumbumbu played on platform. Remembrance feast. Duruma, 1982.
52. Mshondo (single-membrane). Remembrance feast. Duruma, 1982.

- 53. Upatu (gong) accompanying drums. Remembrance feast. Duruma, 1982.
- 54. Rimba (xylophone). Shariani, 1984.
- 55. Ndonga (tin rattle). Shariani, 1984.
- 56. Kayamba (reed rattle). Shariani, 1984.
- 57. Borassus palm nut rattles worn by dancers. Remembrance feast. Shariani, 1982.

#### REMEMBRANCE FEAST

- 58. People arriving at a remembrance feast. Duruma, 1982.
- 59. Women participating in dancing. Remembrance feast. Duruma, 1982.
- 60. Women dancing with babies on their backs. Notice saying on the leso: Tamu ya harusi ni furaha - 'The sweetness of a wedding is happiness'.
- 61. Male dancers lining up to perform at a remembrance feast. Duruma, 1982.
- 62. Male dancers in women's skirts (Borassus palm nut rattles and palm leaf skirt), 1982.
- 63. Dancer in leso. Duruma, 1982.
- 64. Dancer in woman's skirt, and feathers in hair, 1982.
- 65. Young dance group ('modern' costumes), 1982.

#### HEALING

- 66. Katso Kanyoi, muganga. Timboni, 1984.
- 67. Patient and child, at Katso's house, therapy session. Timboni, 1984.
- 68. Katso communicating with spirits. Timboni, 1984.
- 69. Katso sniffing herbal medicine. Timboni, 1984.
- 70. Katso drawing on sand placed on winnowing tray turned upside down for divination. Timboni, 1984.
- 71. Tray with sand and divination patterns. Timboni, 1984.
- 72. Katso with calabash rattle, divining. Timboni, 1984.
- 73. Katso with reed rattle, divining. Timboni, 1984.
- 74. Katso after an exhausting therapy session. Timboni, 1984.
- 75. Drummers tensioning drums for a ngoma za pepo. Timboni, 1984.

76. Chapuo and bumbumbu drums for ngoma za pepo. Timboni, 1984.
77. Katso and drummers ready for ngoma za pepo ceremony. Timboni, 1984.
78. Katso leading possessed person to compound. Timboni, 1984.
79. Possessed person completely covered in white cloth. Timboni, 1984.
80. Mwamau Hamisi making jangamizi: A janus clay figure used in spirit possession. Height: 3ft.
81. Jangamizi, sculpture. Shariani, 1985. Height: approx. 3ft.
82. Jangamizi, sculpture. Shariani, 1985.
83. Jangamizi, sideview. Shariani, 1985.
84. Mwamau Hamisi decorating jangamizi with spots of red ochre. 1985.
85. Jangamizi, side view, showing child-figure, no sexual organs indicated.
86. Jangamizi, side view, showing child-figure, no sexual organs indicated.
87. Jangamizi, female view. 1985.
88. Jangamizi, male view. 1985.

#### MIKOMA

89. Charo Dida with memorial sticks of his ancestors under shelter. Timboni, 1984.
90. Memorial shelter and men's meeting house. Timboni, 1984.
91. Memorial sticks at Charo's home. Height: 8-10ins. Timboni, 1984.
92. Dilapidated memorial shelter at Karisa wa Fondo's home. Timboni, 1984.
93. Memorial stick representing woman, and showing ritual colours. Ribe, 1982.
94. Memorial shelter at Mulai wa Kabao's home. Shariani, 1984.
95. Memorial representing ordinary ancestors and luvoo elders. 1984.
96. Memorials at Mulai's home. 1984.
97. Memorials representing ordinary ancestors and luvoo elders, at the home of Mwanjale Nduria. Shariani, 1984.

98. Memorials showing ritual colours. 1984.

VIGANGO

99. Charo wa Mbita, luvoo elder, wearing luvoo bracelet. Shariani, 1985.
100. Luvoo bracelet made of buffalo horn. 1985.
101. Maize field where some vigango are located. Matsangoni, 1984.
102. The grandson of one of the deceased ancestors represented by vigango. 1984.
103. Vigango (decorated). Height: 5ft. Vibao (plain). Height:
104. Two of the vigango showing decorations. 1984.
105. Patterns on lower section of vigango. Vibao are plain. 1984.
106. Patterns on backview of vigango. 1984.
107. Close-up of patterns on vigango. 1984.
108. Close-up of patterns on upper section of vigango. 1984.
109. Close-up of patterns on middle section of kigango. 1984.
110. Close-up of patterns on head of kigango. 1984.
111. Vigango, very old, at a Nairobi curio-stall. 1985.
112. Kigango. Height: 7ft. At a Nairobi curio-stall. 1985.
113. Kigango, showing head and cloth tied at neck. Nairobi, 1985.
114. Kigango, lower section. 1985.
115. Kigango, close-up of patterning at lower section. 1985.
116. Kigango, in the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution.
117. Kigango, courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi.
118. Kigango, courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi.
119. Kigango, with white and blue colours, courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi.
120. Kigango, courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi.
121. Kigango, courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi.
122. Kigango with coins marking eyes. Courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi.
123. Kigango, fake. Notice machine-planed plank. Courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi.

124. Kigango, front view. Courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi.
125. Kigango, back view. Patterns similar to Swahili, Boni and Bajun. Courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi.
126. Kigango, close-up of patterns at middle section. Courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi.
127. Kigango, close-up of patterns at lower section. Courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi.

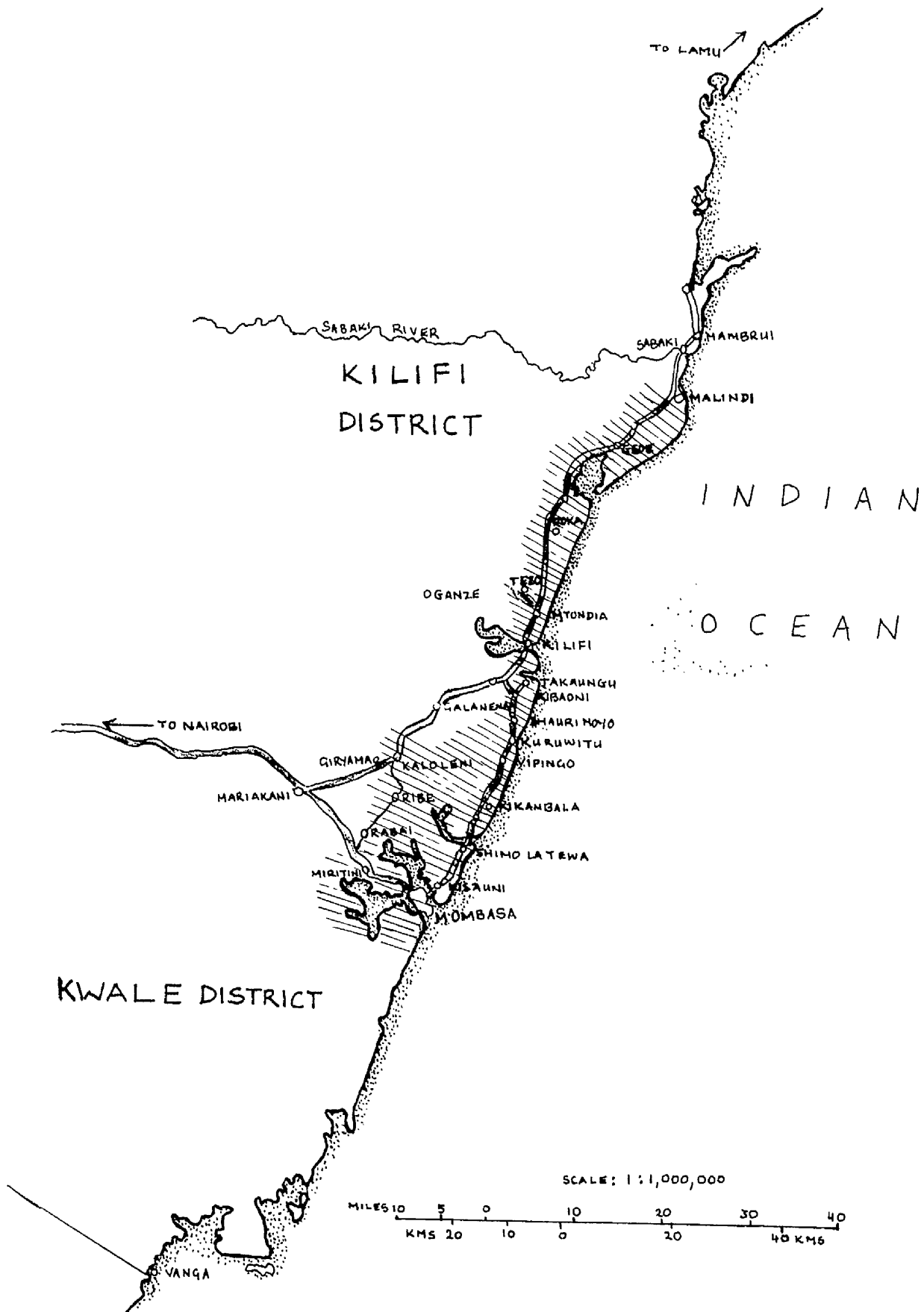
#### TOURIST ART

128. Giriama carvers' workshop. Matsangoni, 1984.
129. Kahindi Kaingu (Giriama) carving a mask. Matsangoni, 1984.
130. Kahindi Kaingu carving a mask. 1984.
131. Katana Kazungu (Giriama). Matsangoni, 1984.
132. Kamba Carvers. Changanwe Carving Cooperative (CCC). Mombasa, 1982.
133. Kamba carver. CCC, 1982.
134. Kamba carver, CCC, 1982.
135. Kamba carver. CCC, 1982.
136. Kamba carver. CCC, 1982.
137. Kamba carver. CCC, 1982.
138. Kamba carver. CCC, 1982.
139. Kamba carver. CCC, 1982.

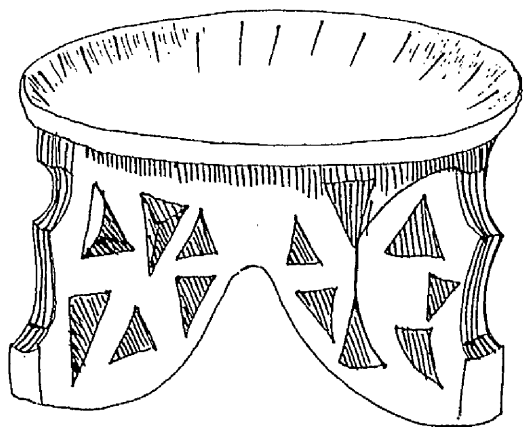
#### KAMBA BEADED ORNAMENTS

140. Kamba beaded belt (compare technique and patterns with Mijikenda type beadwork).
141. Kamba beaded belt (compare with Mijikenda beadwork).
142. Kamba beaded band (compare with Mijikenda beadwork).
143. Kamba beaded apron (compare patterns with Mijikenda ones).

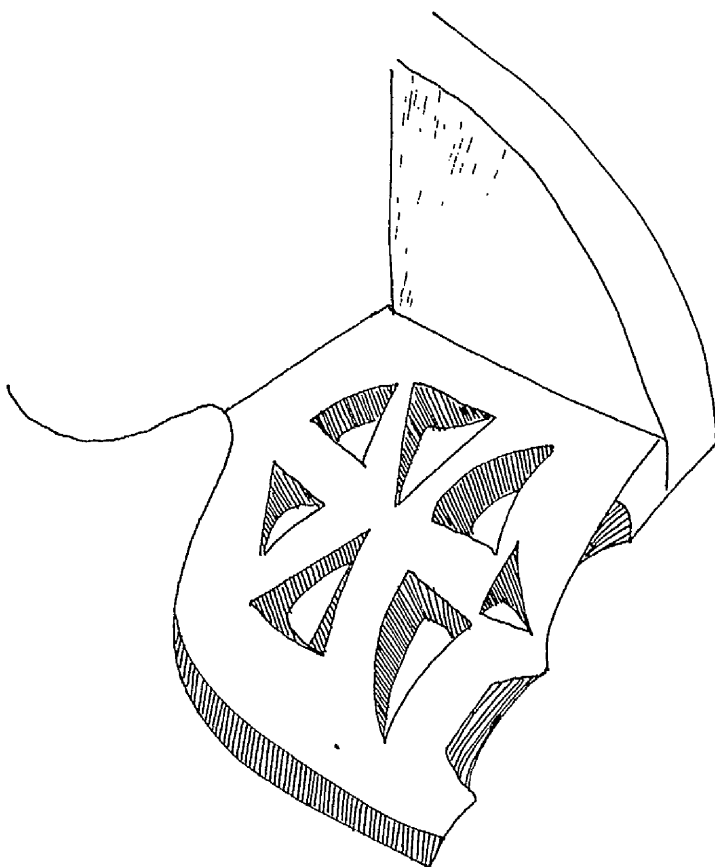
AREAS OF FIELD RESEARCH







Height: 10.5"  
Diameter: 10"  
Excised patterns



GIRIAMA STOOL: 3-LEGGED WITH TRIANGULAR MOTIFS  
NAIROBI MUSEUM: UC 1969: 46

Fig. 1

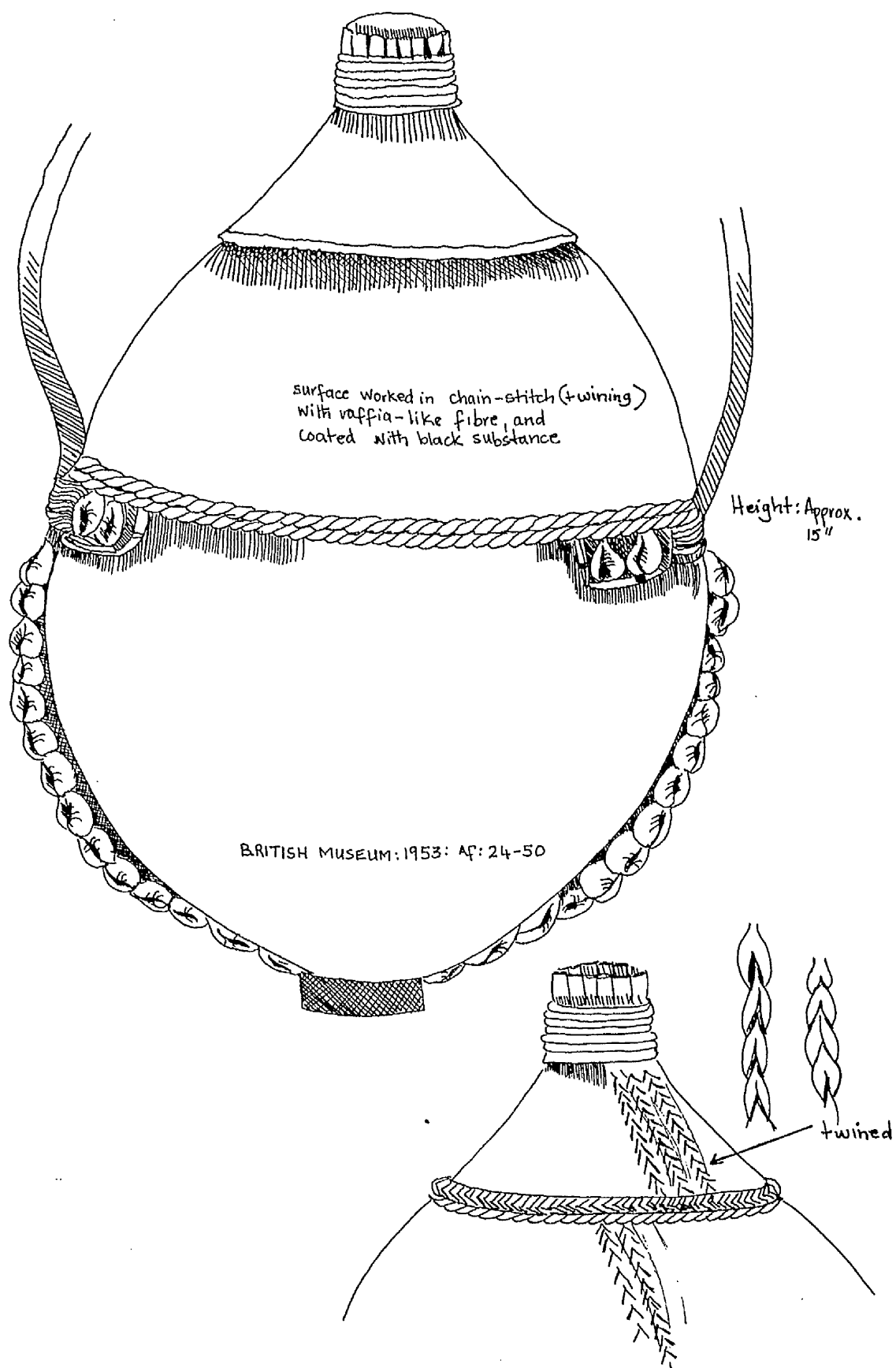
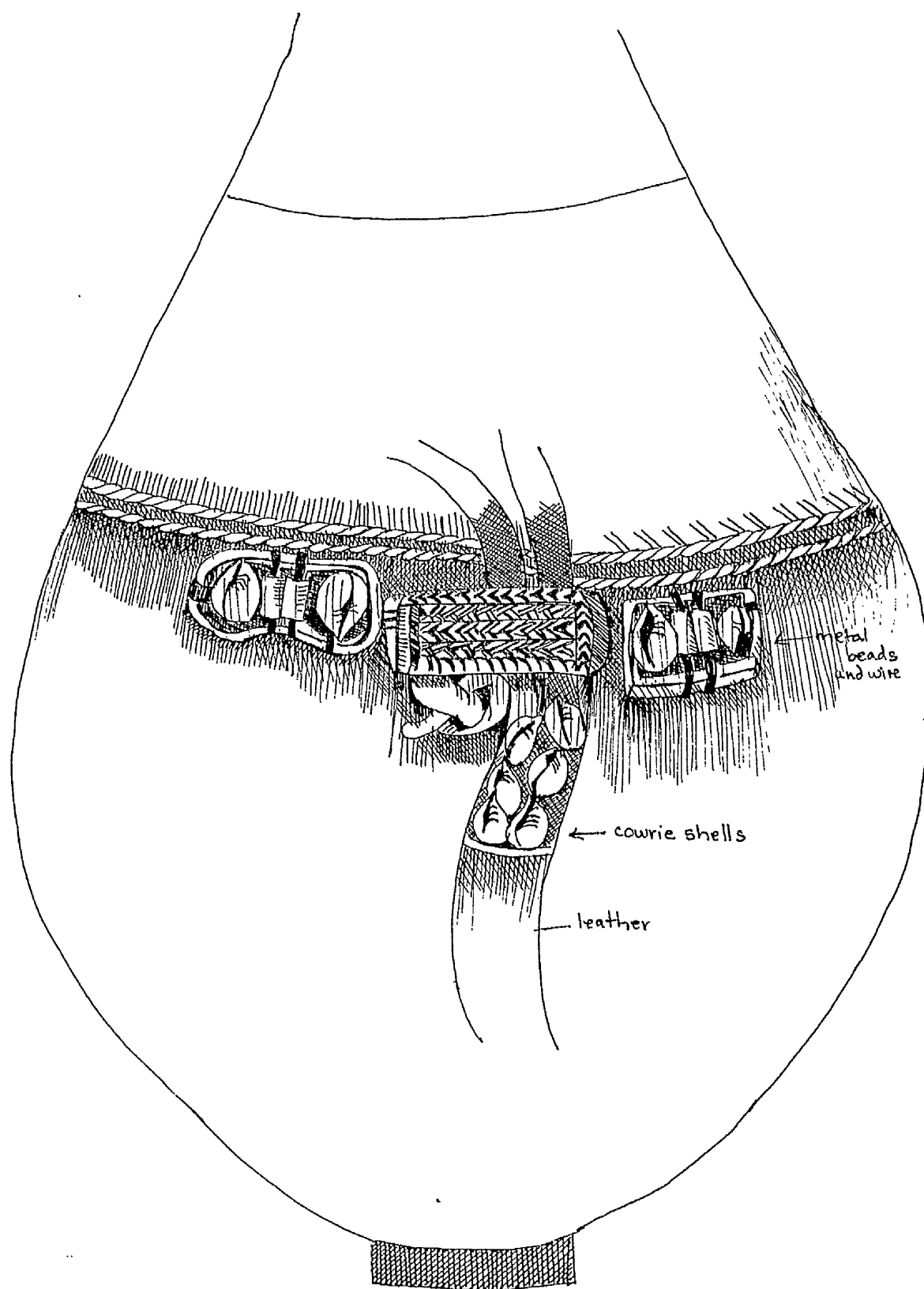
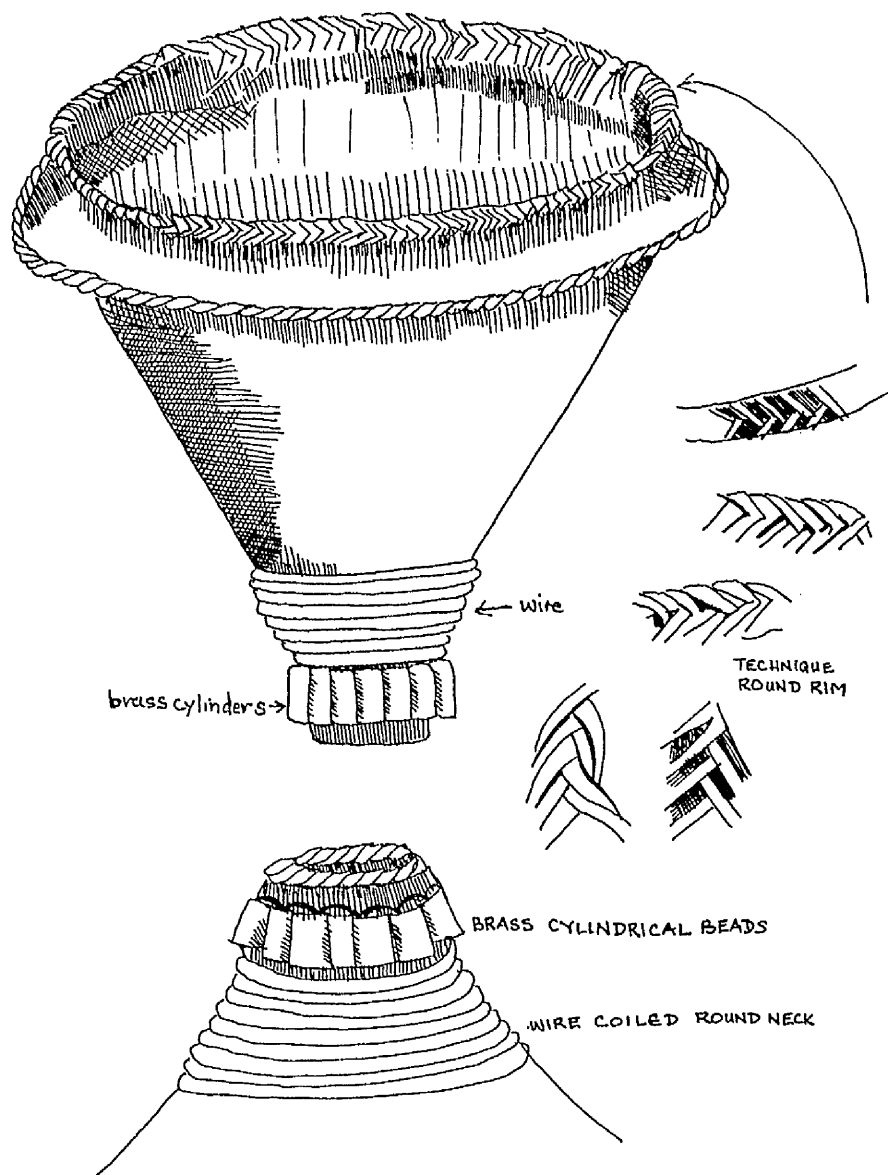


FIG. 2



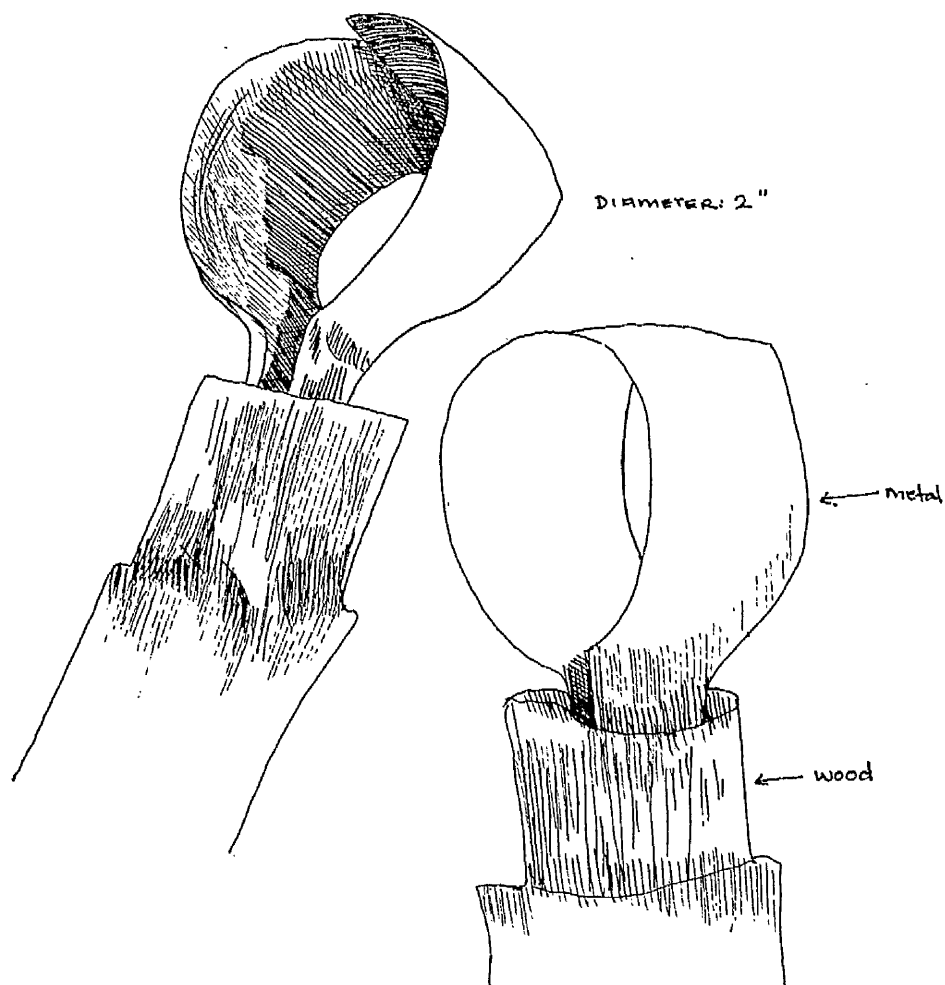
DETAIL OF ORNAMENTATION: CONTAINER (BASKETRY TECHNIQUE)  
BRITISH MUSEUM: 1953: Af: 24-50

FIG. 3



DETAIL OF LID OF CONTAINER  
BRITISH MUSEUM: 1953: Africa: 24-50

FIG. 4



KNM:UC 1969:47 : GIRIAMA KOMBE (GOUGE) FOR HOLLOWING OUT

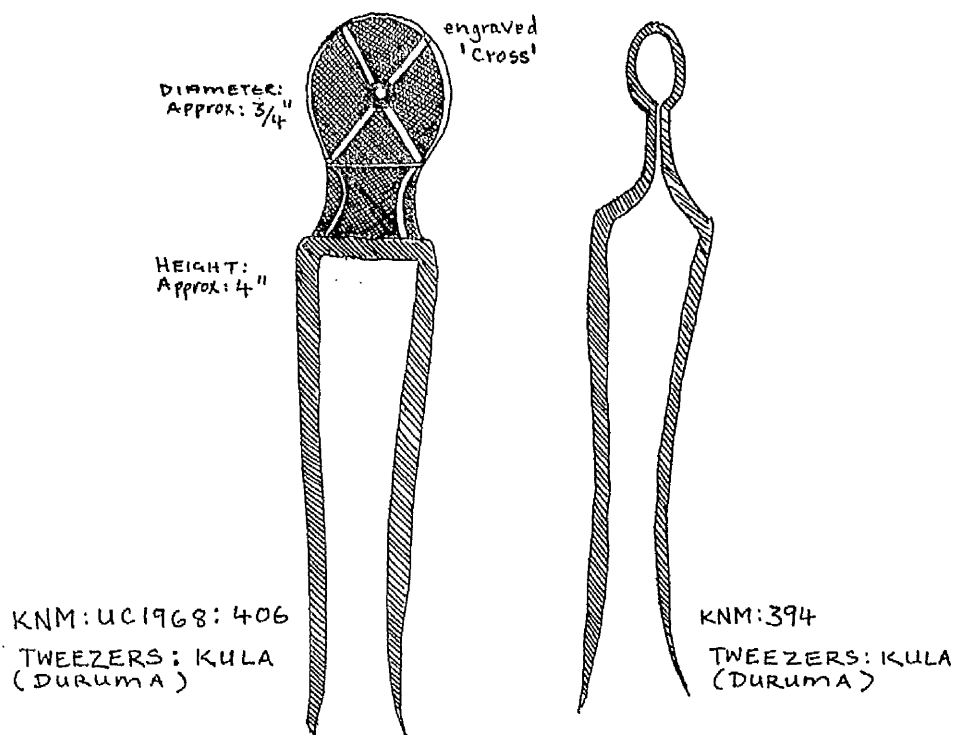
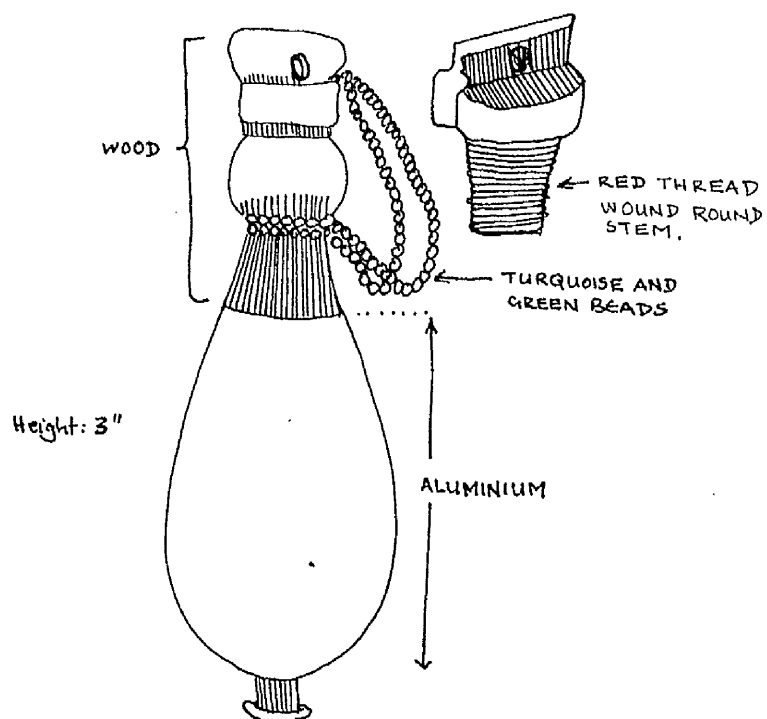
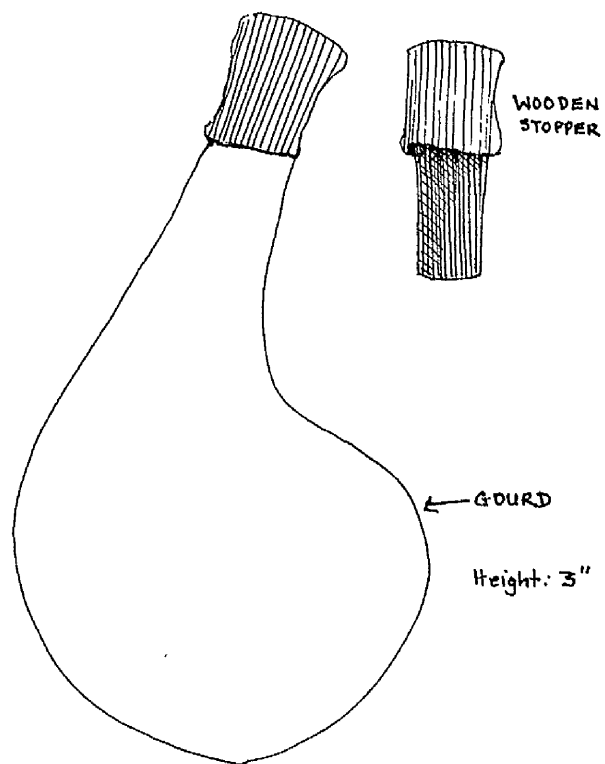
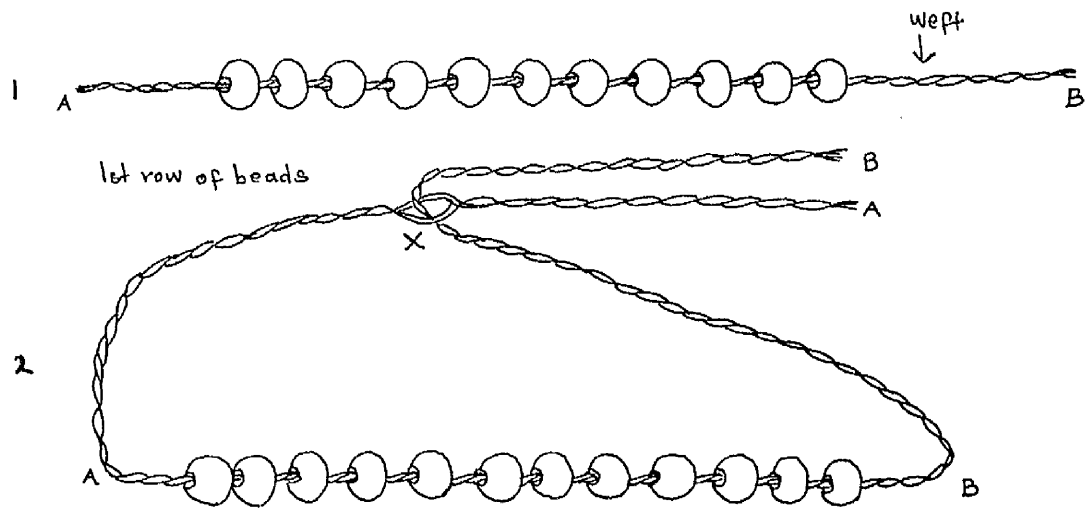


FIG. 5

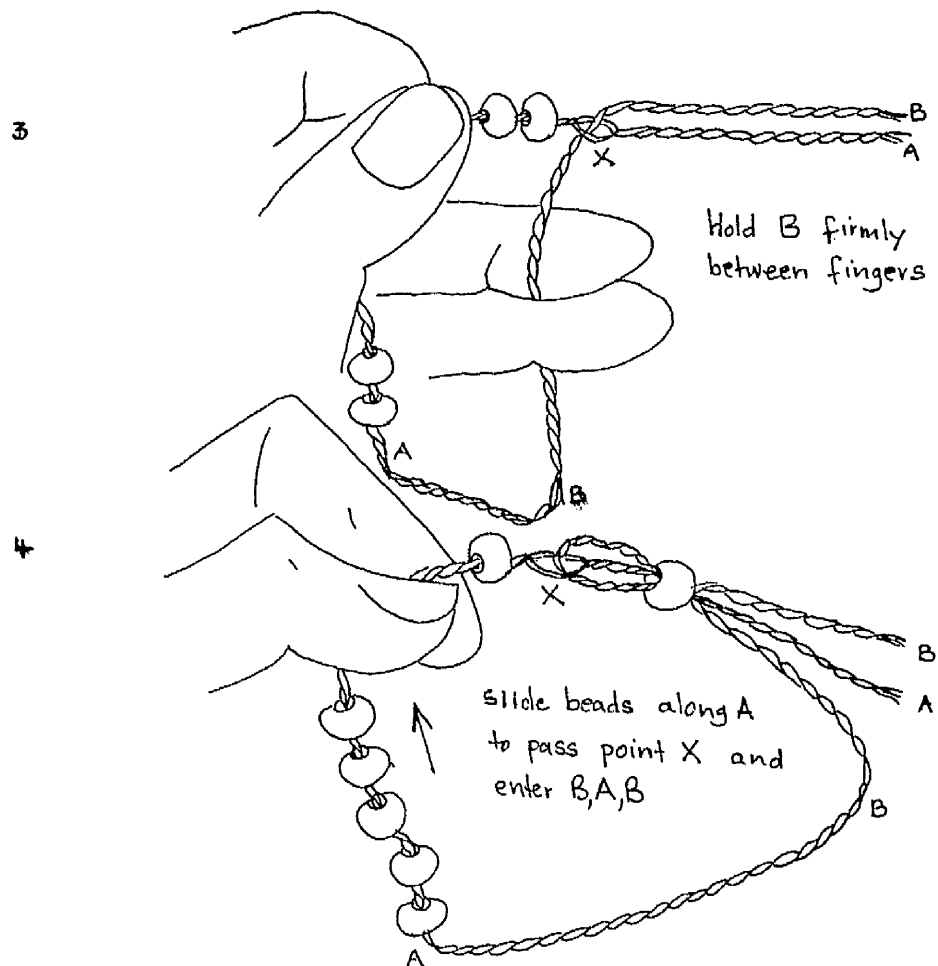


GIRIAMA SNUFF CONTAINERS: NAIROBI MUSEUM: UC1969: 88a,b

FIG. 6

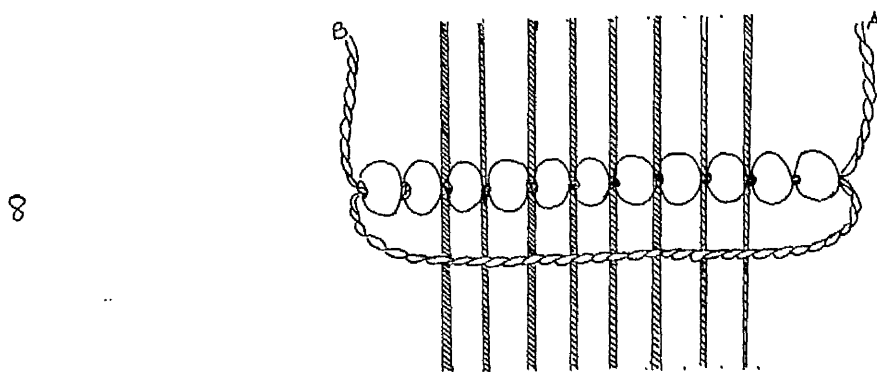
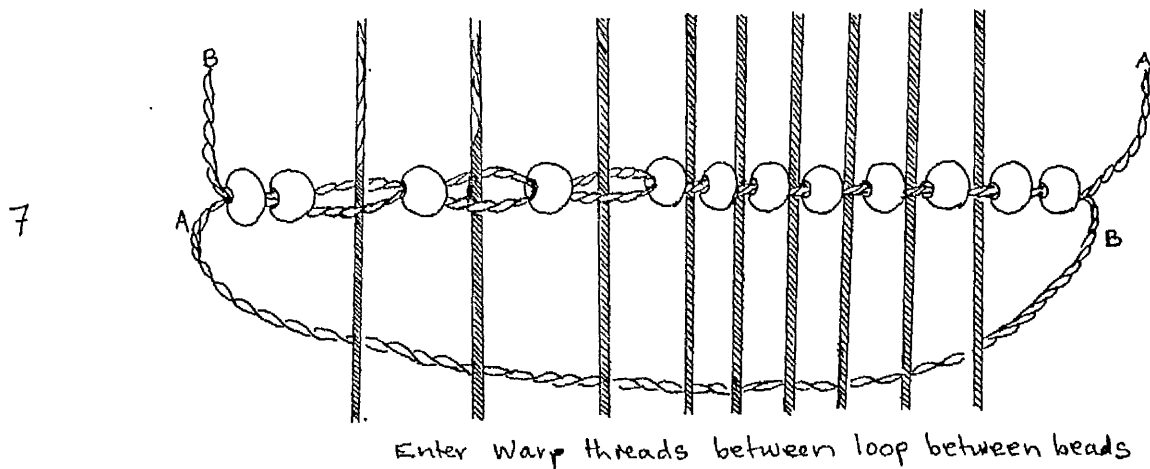
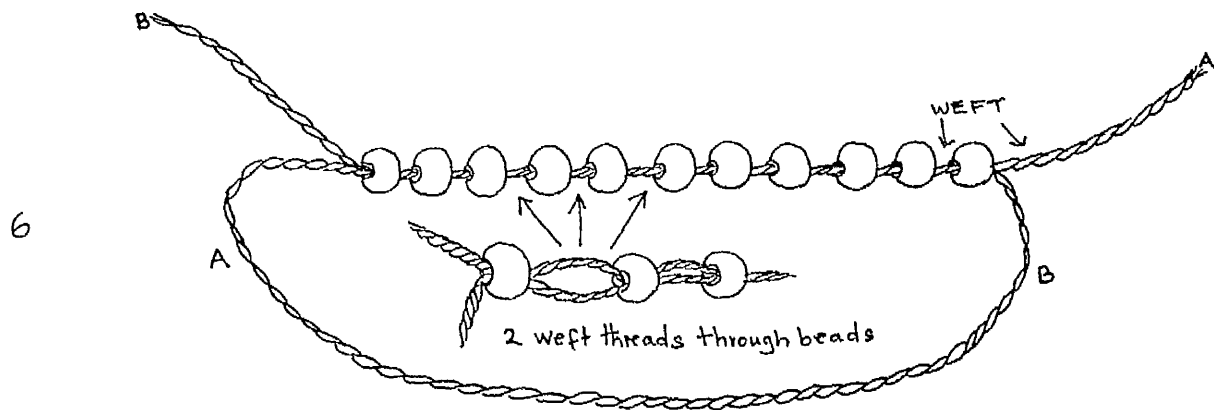
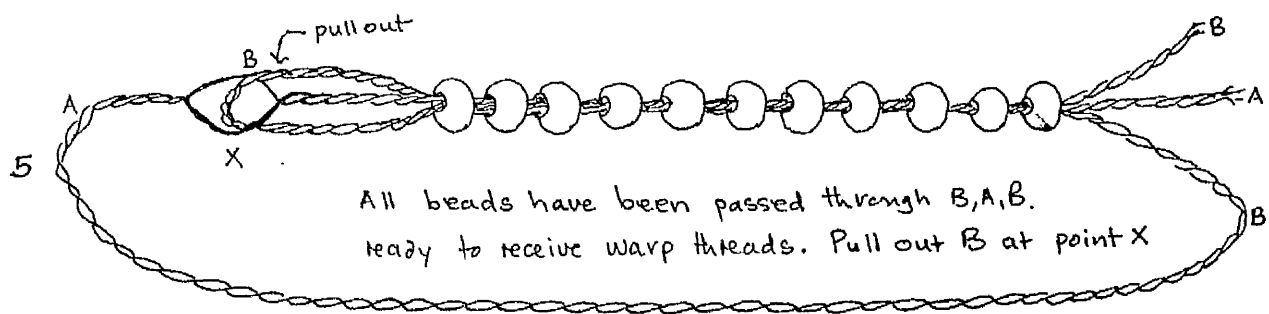


At point X, unravel string A and pass B through position A and B, horizontally.



VORODEDE : TECHNIQUE : TWINED

FIG. 7

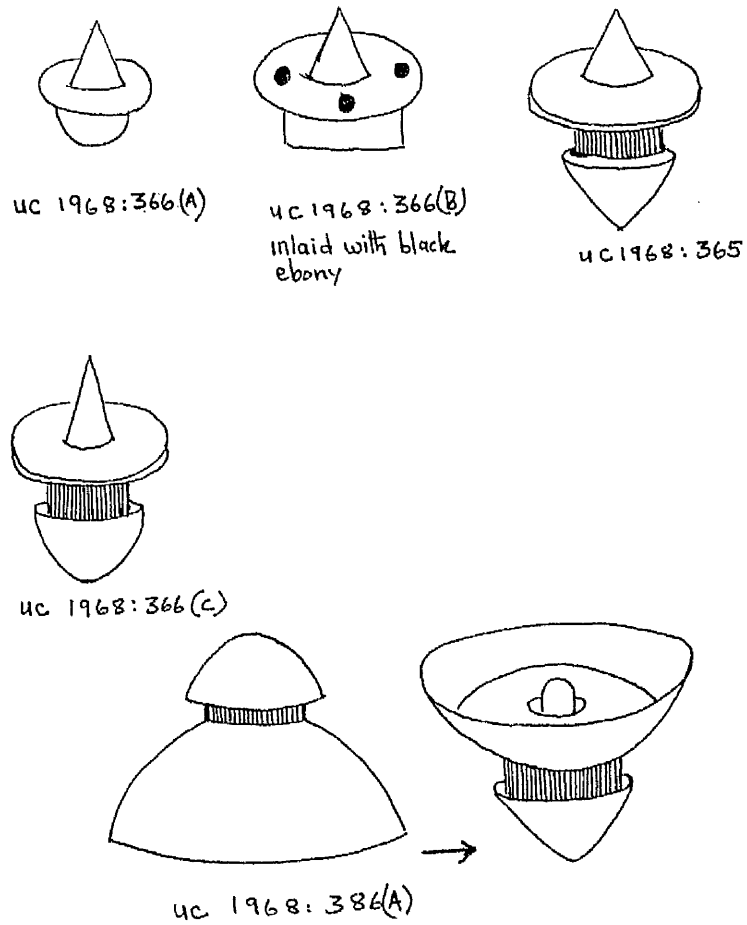


Warp threads positioned and beads straightened

VORODEJE : TECHNIQUE : TWINED

FIG. 8





ACTUAL SIZES

DURUMA ALUMINIUM EARPLUGS (VIFUFU)  
KNM (NAIROBI MUSEUM): UC 1968:366A, 366B, 365, 386A, 366C.

FIG. 9

DURUMA ALUMINIUM SPIKE EARPLUGS : VIFUFU  
KNM (NAIROBI MUSEUM: UC 1968 a,b, d)

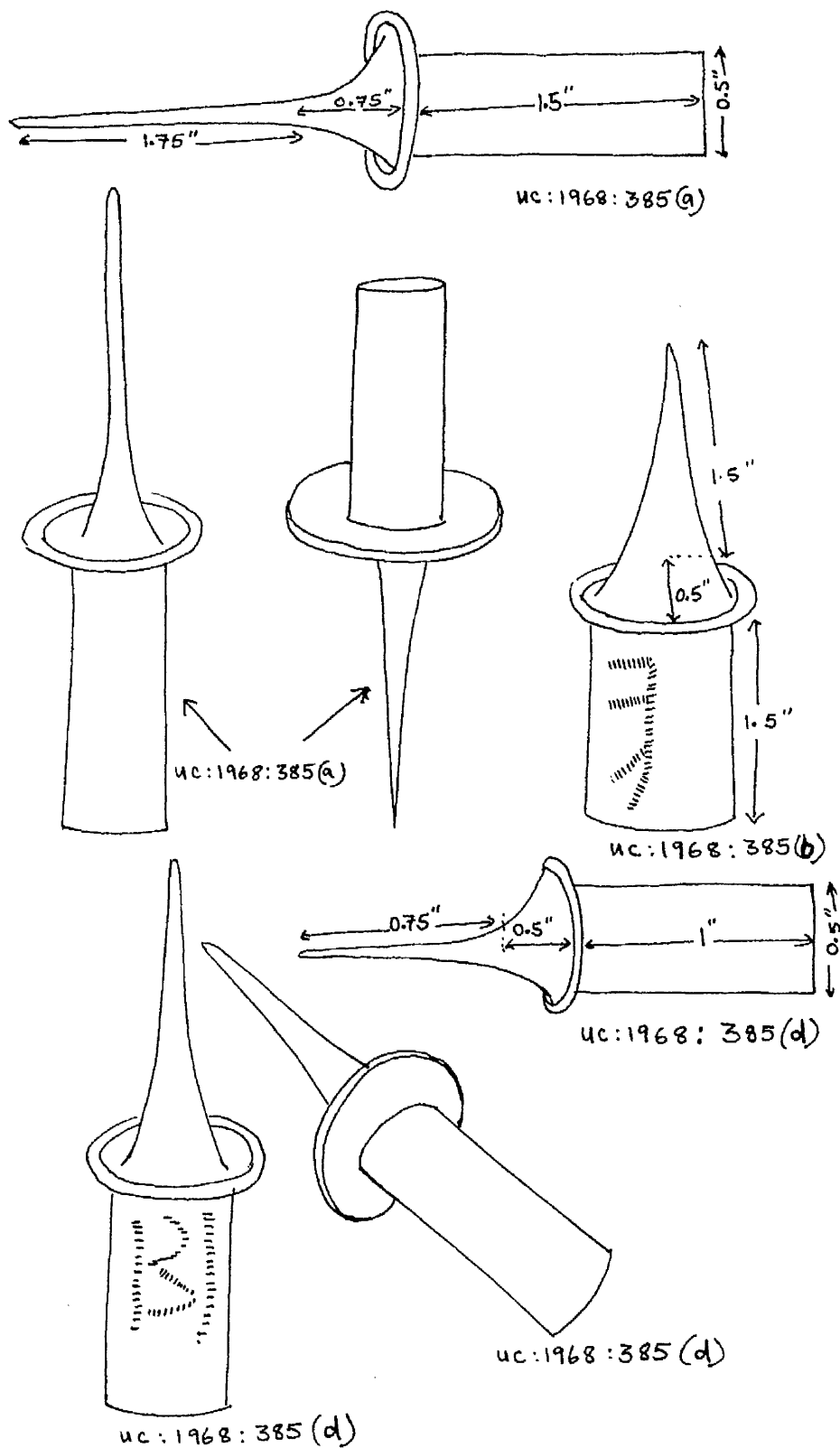
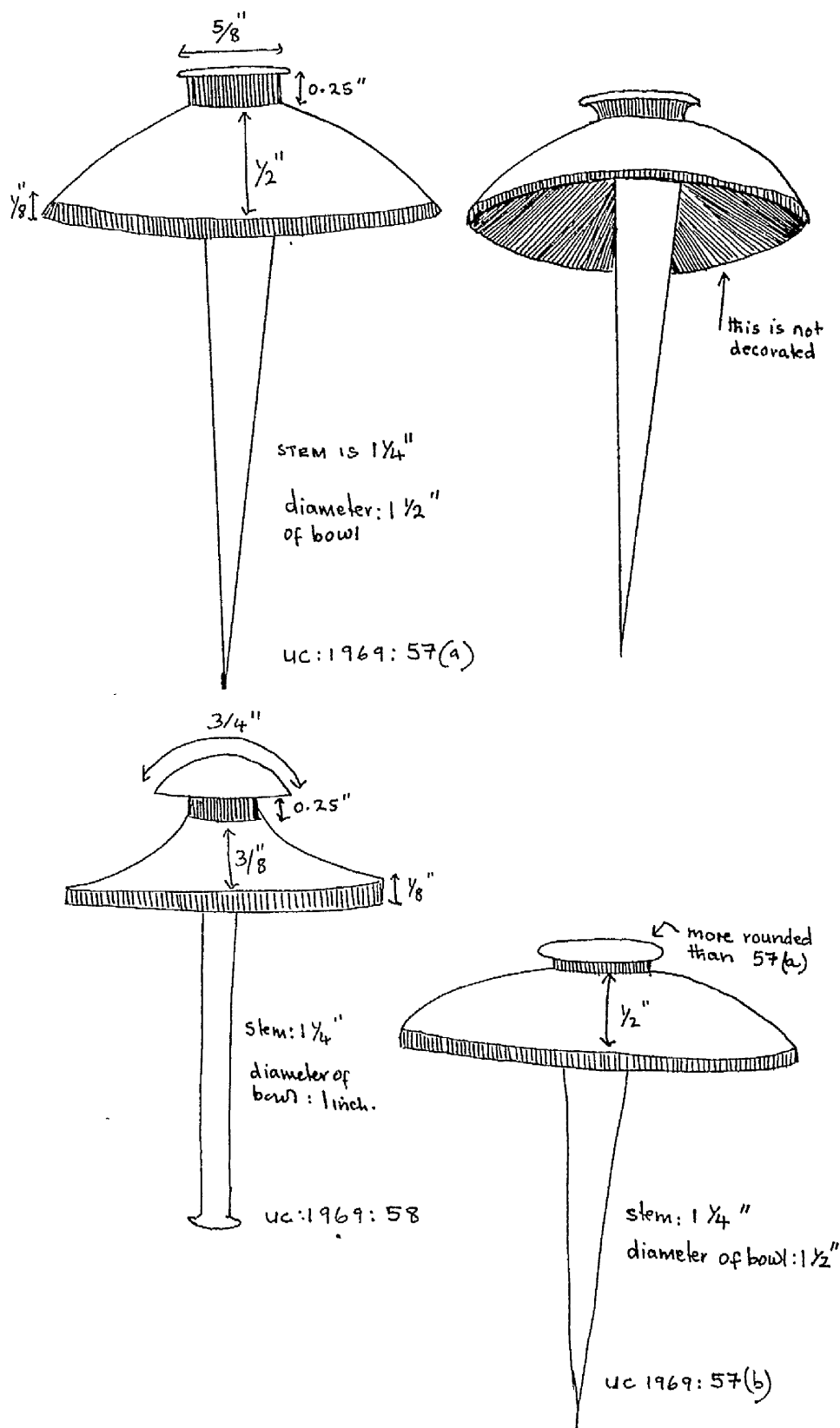
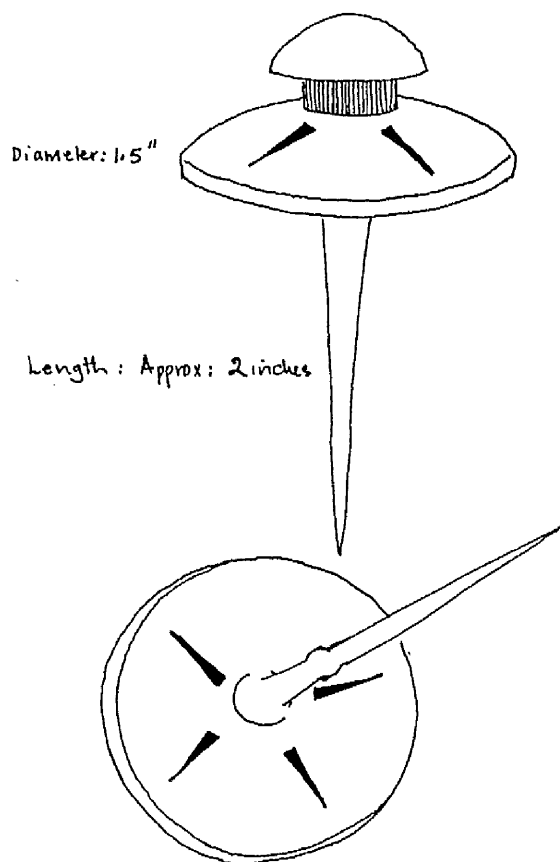


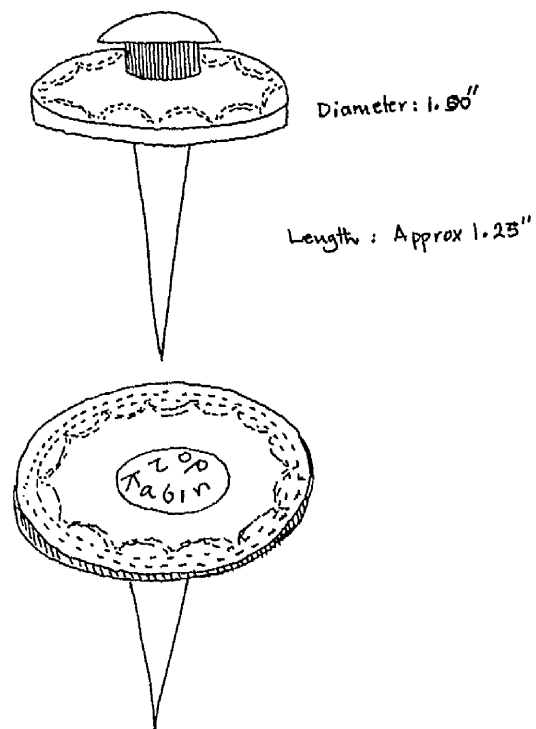
FIG.10



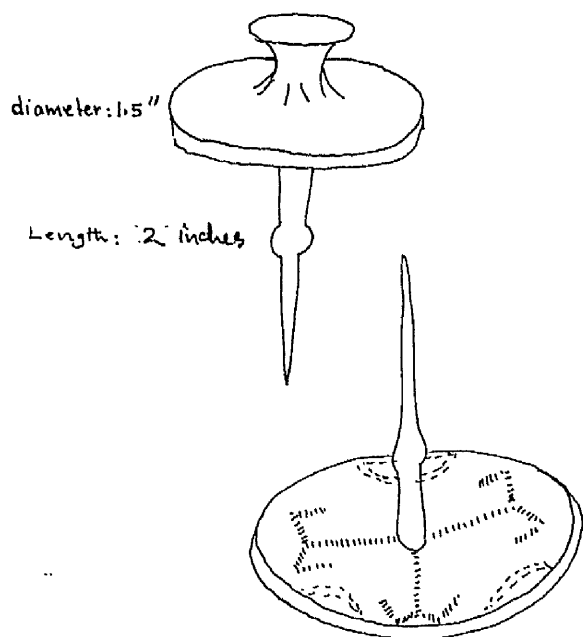
GIRIAMA ALUMINIUM SPIKE EARPLUGS: VIFUFU  
KNM (NAIROBI MUSEUM): UC 1969: 57(a,b), 58.



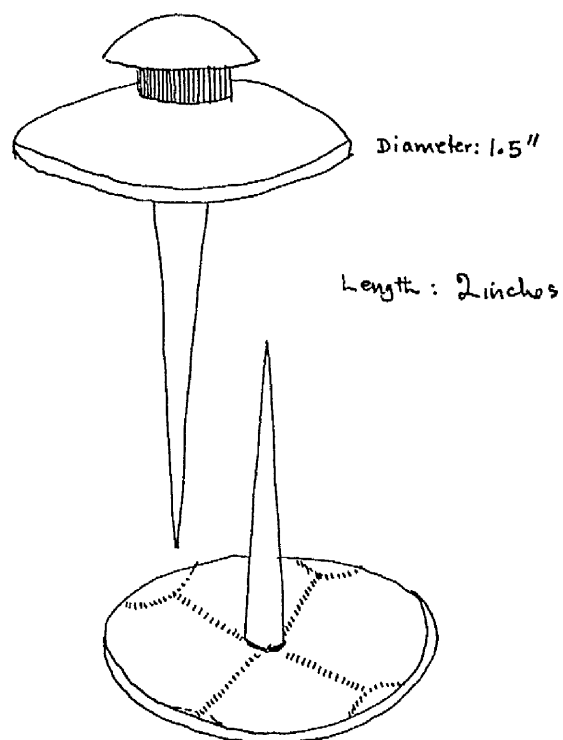
NCS:1985:V.1



NCS:1985:V.2

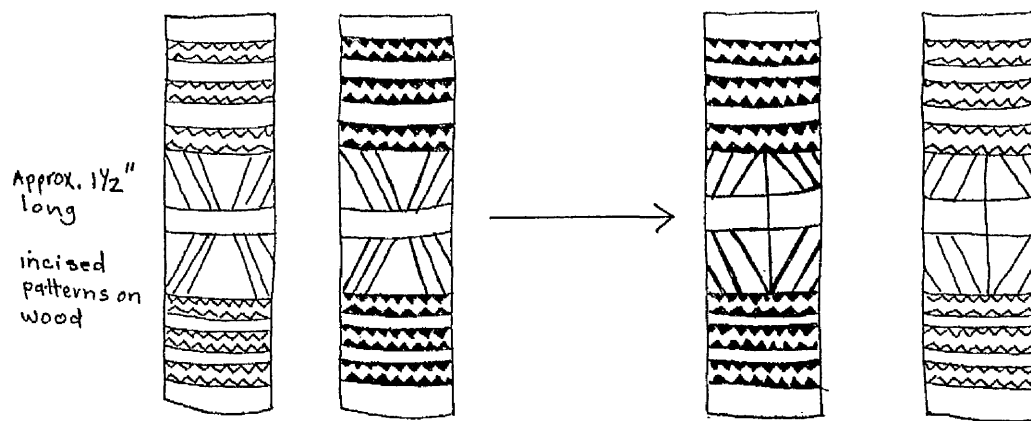


NCS:1985:V.3

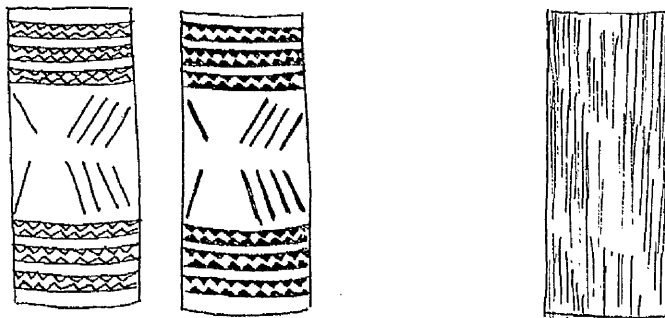


NCS:1985:V.4

FIG. 12

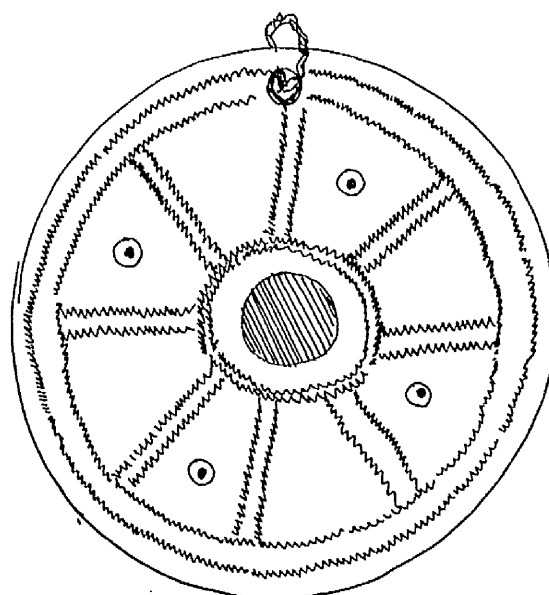


WOODEN EAR-PLUGS (KNM: UC 1969:60a)



WOODEN EAR-PLUG (KNM: UC 1969:60b). MAIZE STALK EAR-PLUG (KNM: UC 1969:59)

FIG. 13



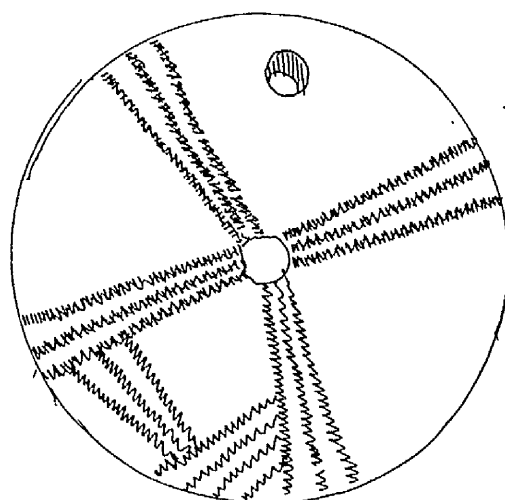
Diameter: 2.75 inches

Pattern on reverse:  
almost identical

Copper in centre



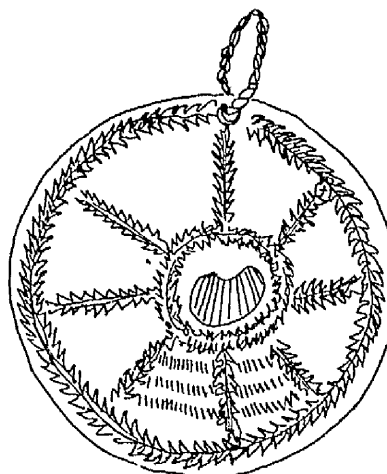
PURUMA ALUMINIUM DISC: MWERI (KNM: UC 1968: 423)



Diameter: 2.5 inches

Reverse: undecorated

KNM: UC 1968: 423 B



Diameter: 2 inches

Reverse: Undecorated

Copper inlaid at  
centre



KNM: UC 1968: 387.

FIG. 14

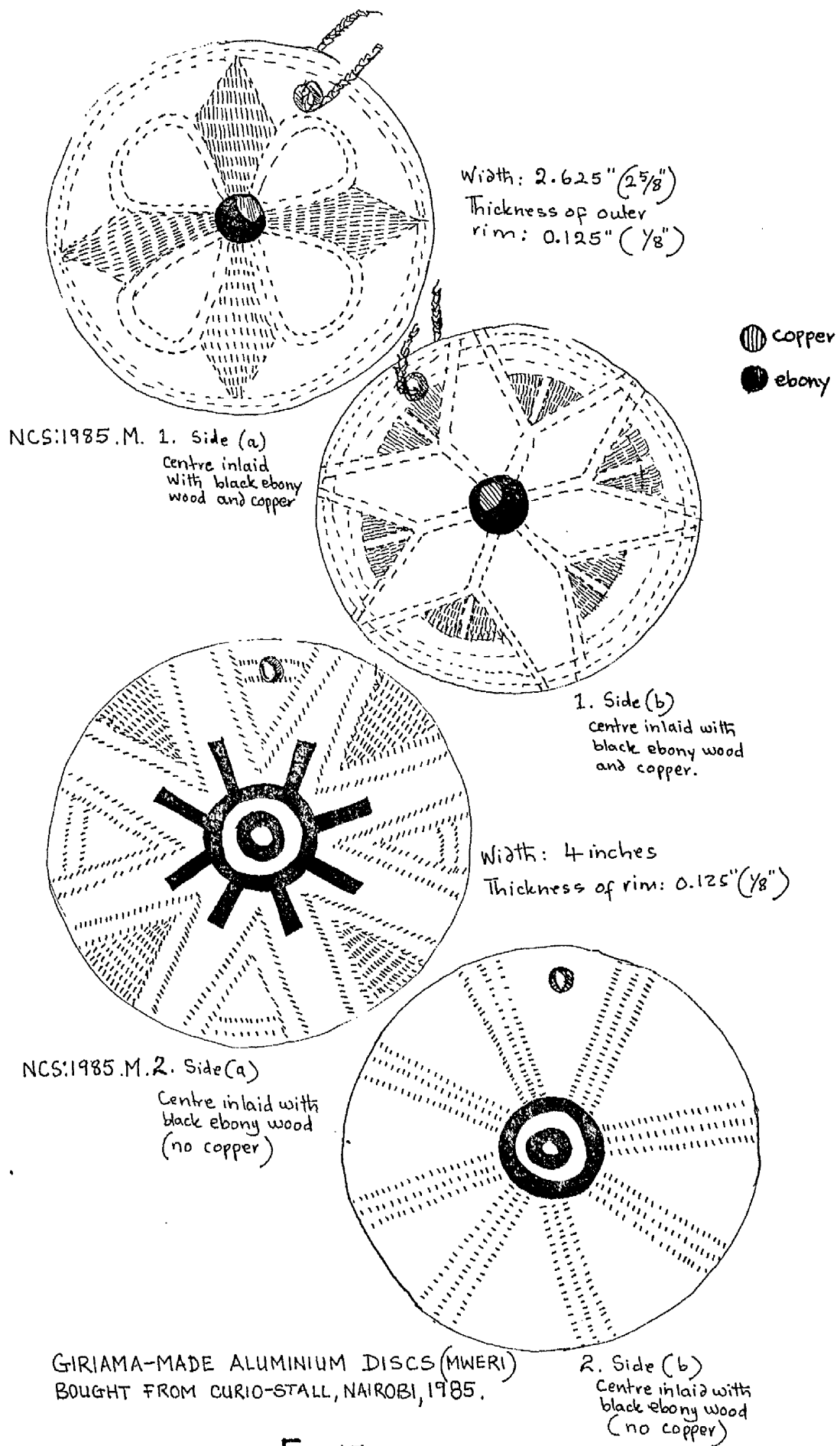
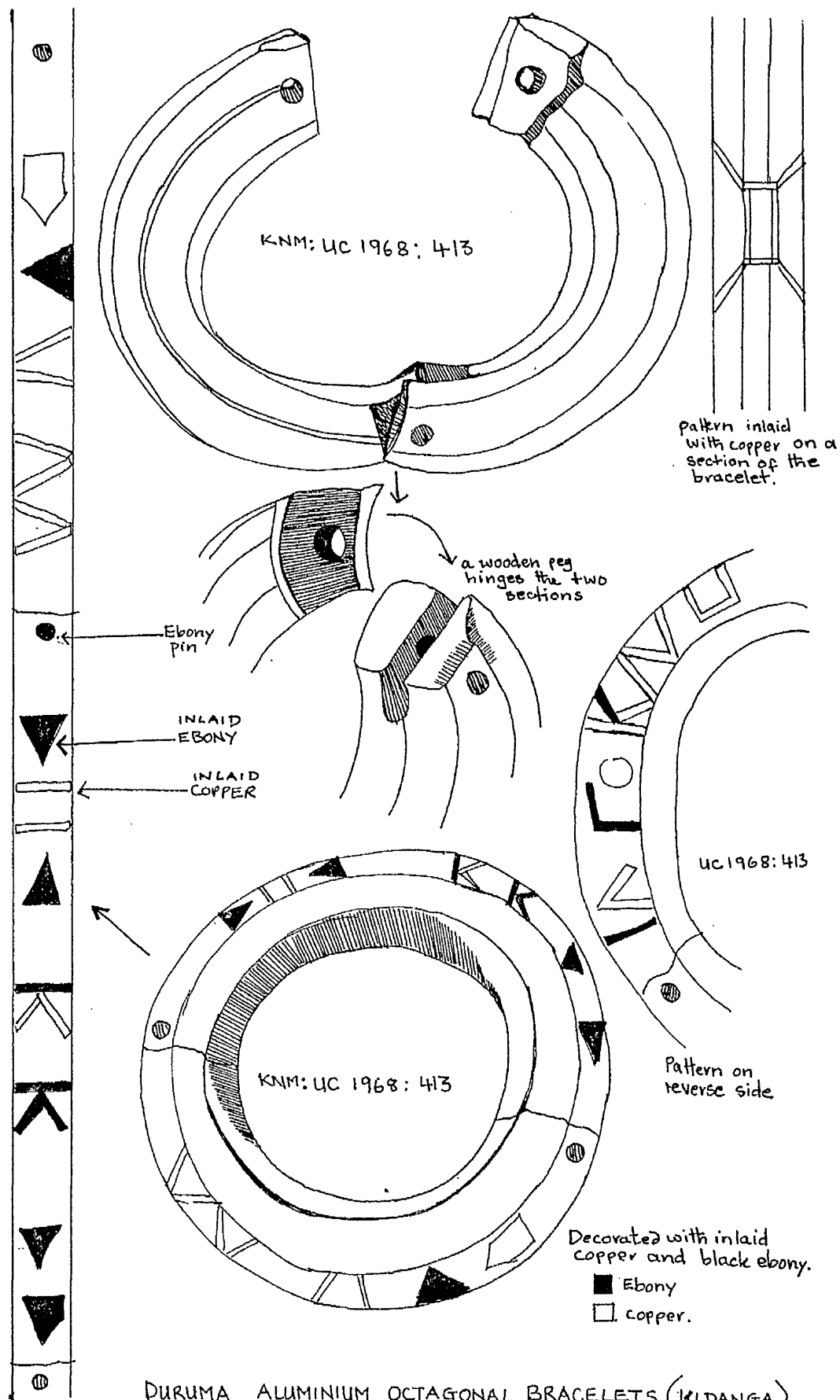


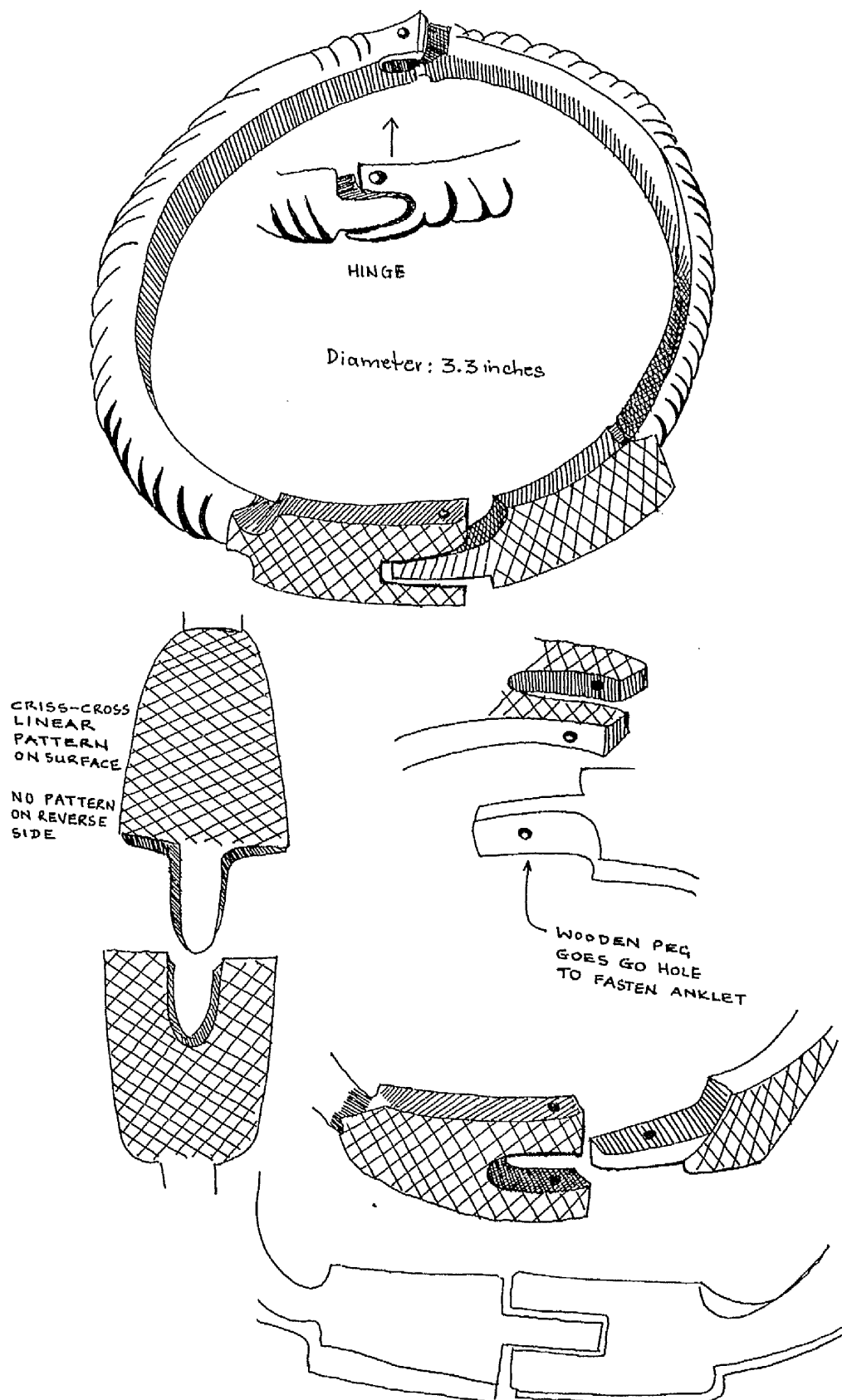
FIG.15



DURUMA ALUMINIUM OCTAGONAL BRACELETS (KIDANGA)  
MADE BY GIRIAMA CRAFTSMAN. KNM (NAIROBI MUSEUM): UC 1968: 413 a, b.

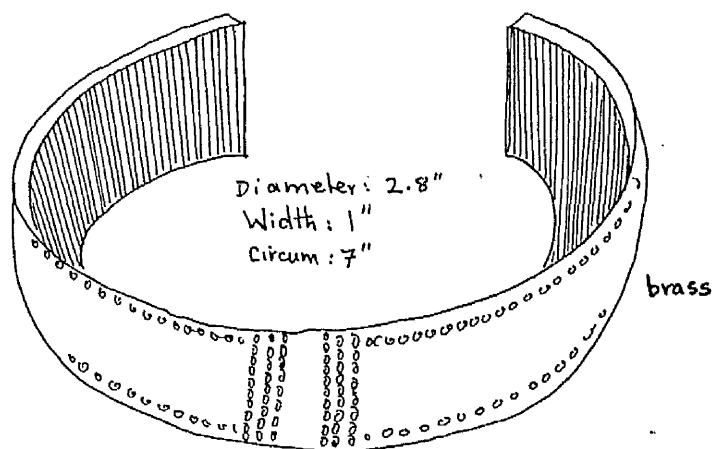
FIG. 16



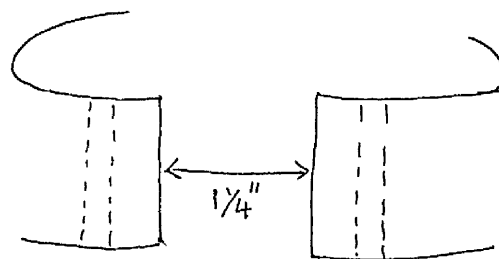
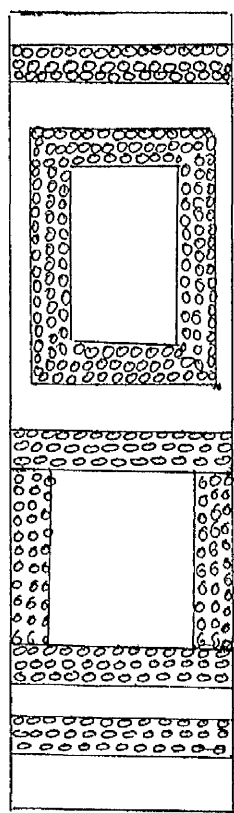


BRASS ANKLET : BRITISH MUSEUM : 1915 : 7-3 : 37

FIG. 17

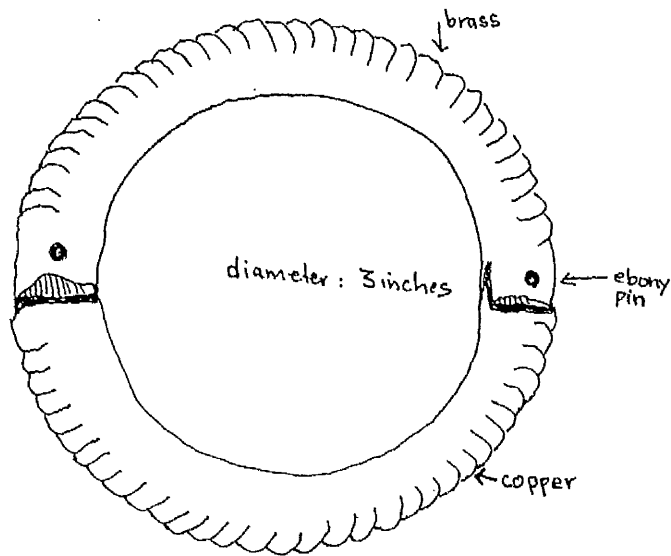


Decorated with raised dots on smooth surface  
3 rows of dots in grooved band

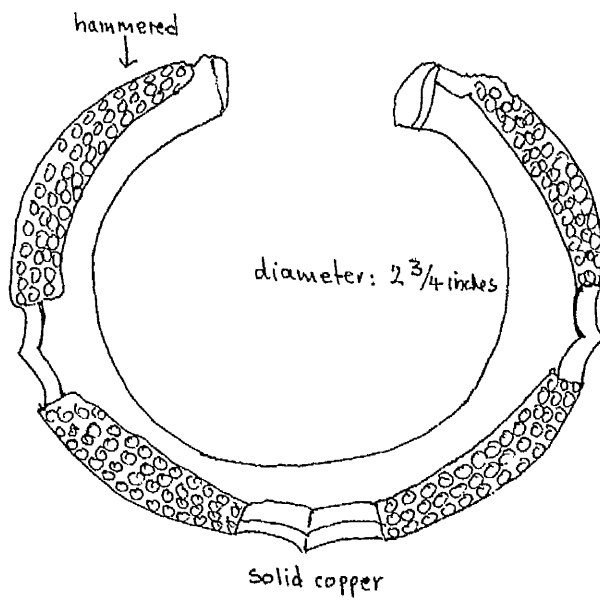


BRITISH MUSEUM: 1915: 7-3: 36 ; GIRIAMA BRACELET.

FIG. 18

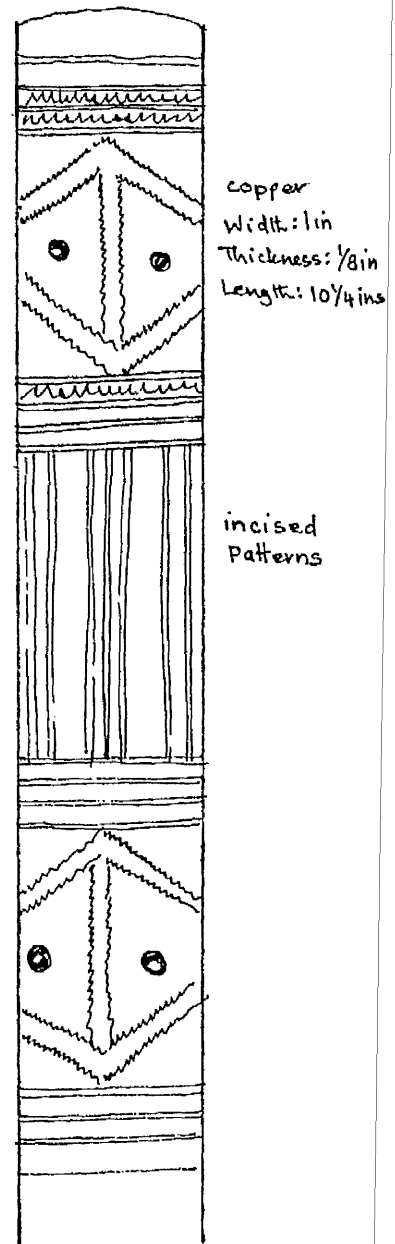


NCS:1985:B.1.



NCS:1985:B.2. (Ngandu)

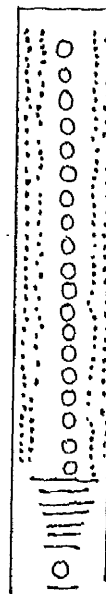
GIRIAMA BRACELETS



copper  
width: 1 in  
thickness: 1/8 in  
length: 10 1/4 ins

incised  
patterns

NCS:1985:B.3.  
(UKOZO)

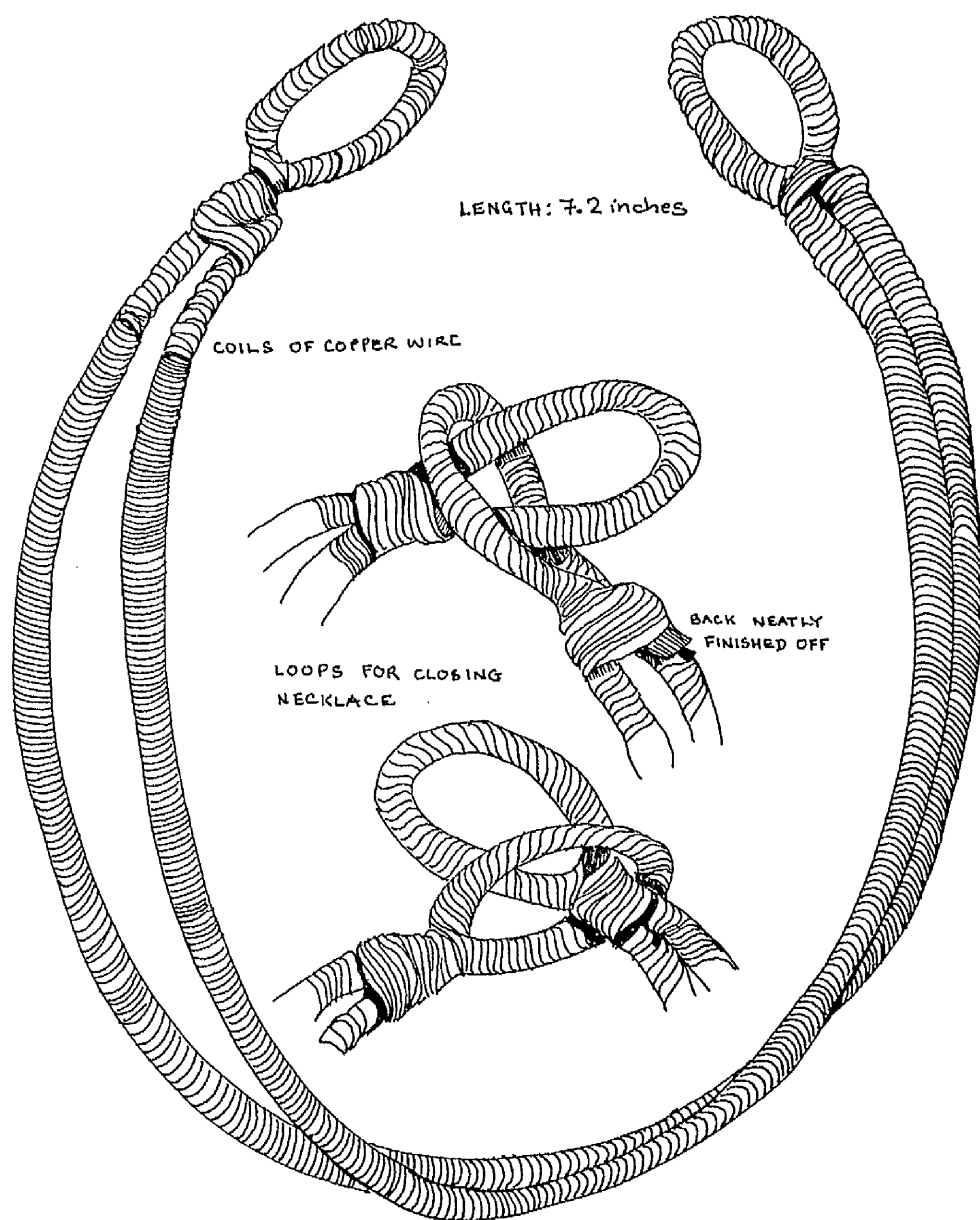


brass bracelet  
width: 1/2 in.  
thickness: 1/8 in  
length: 10 1/2 ins.

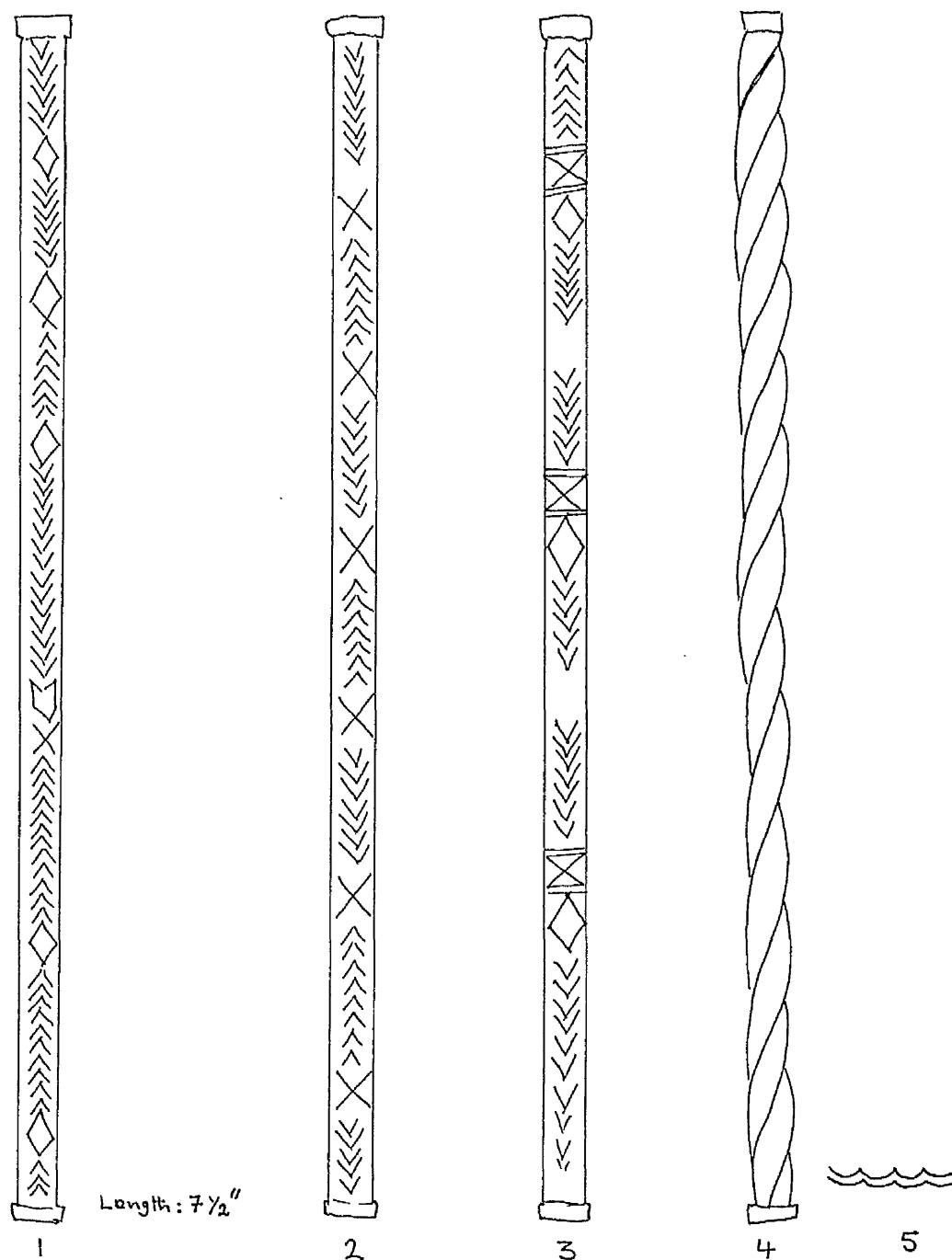
incised and hammered  
patterns






NCS:1985:B.4.

FIG. 19



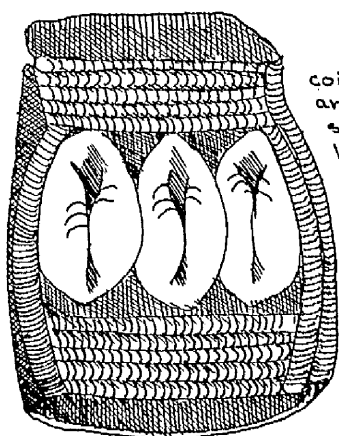
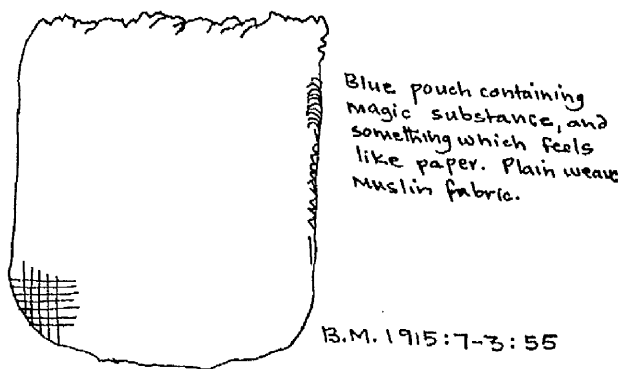
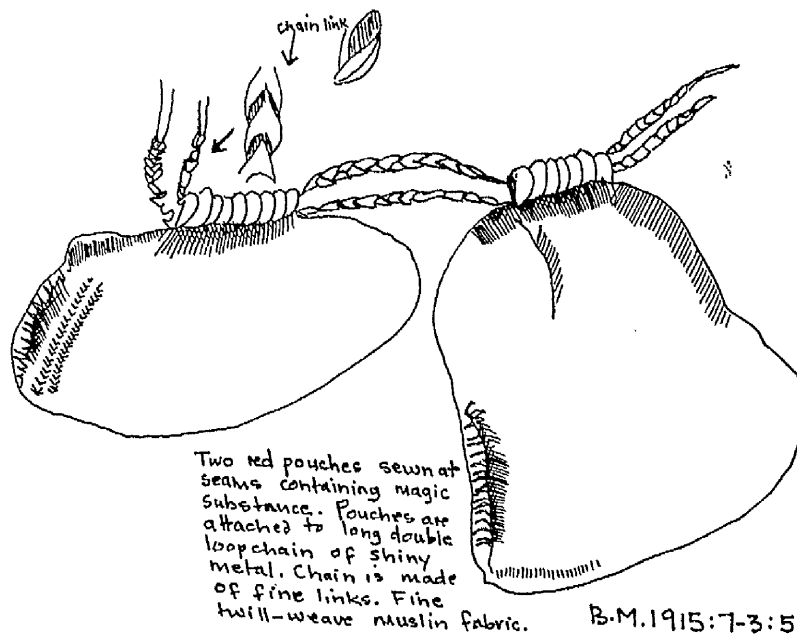
GRIAMA LOOPED NECKLACE : COPPER WIRE  
BRITISH MUSEUM: 1915: 7-3: 39



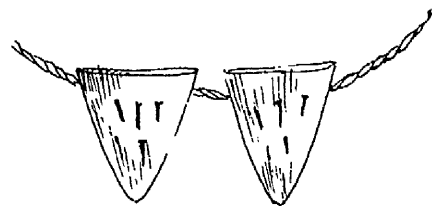
- 1: COPPER BRACELET FOR BARAWA SPIRIT ; SIGN IS 
- 2: COPPER BRACELET FOR PEMBA SPIRIT SIGN IS    
 called nyota =   
 star
- 3: COPPER BRACELET WHICH COMBINES BOTH  and 
- 4: COPPER AND IRON BRACELET FOR MISHIHIRI SPIRIT   
 SIGN IS TWISTED METAL
- 5: WHITE METAL WITH THIS MOTIF  IS FOR PEPO SPIRIT

(SHARIANI, 1985)

FIG. 21

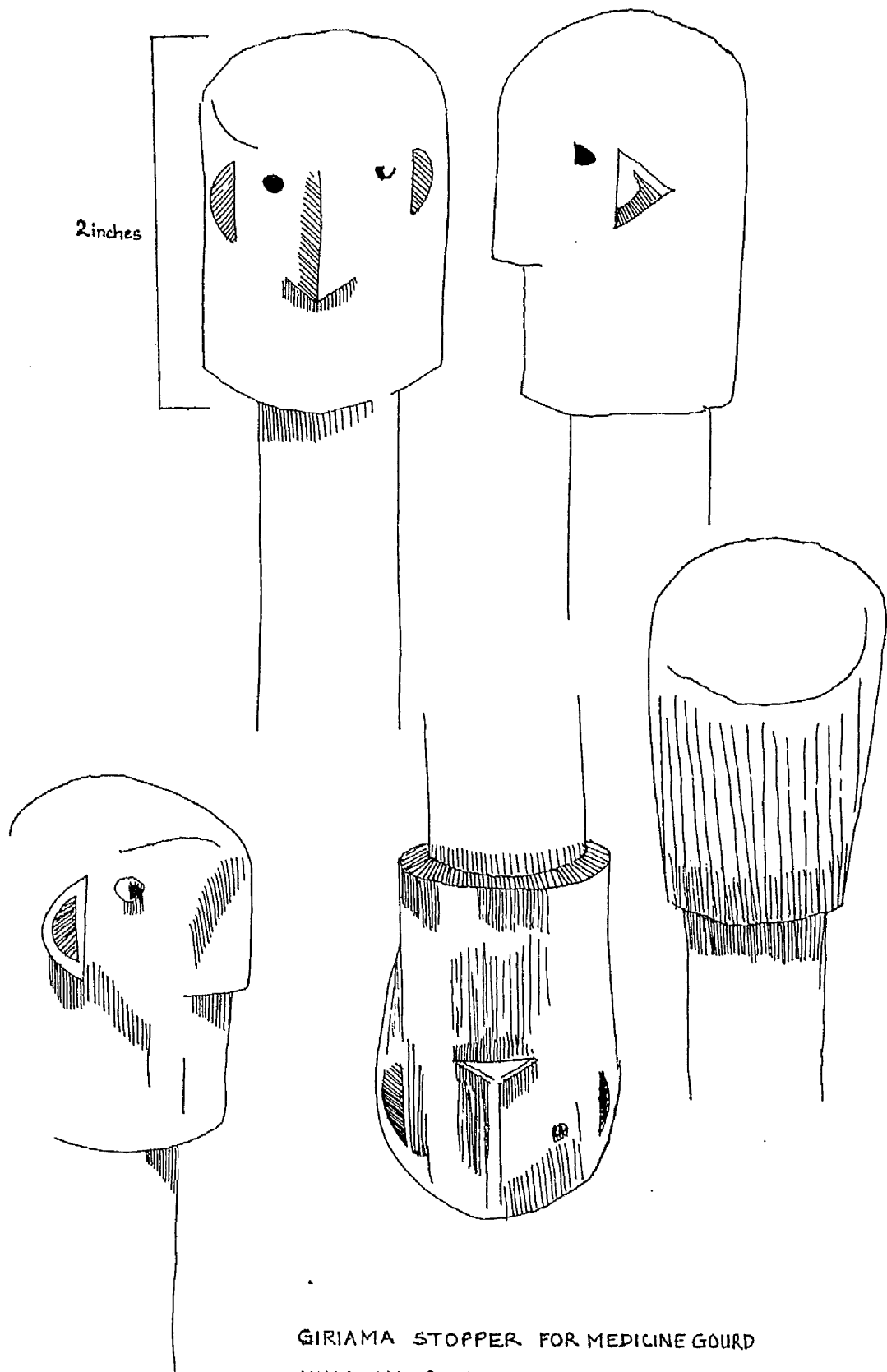


KNM: UC 1968: 403 (KIVELE)



## MAGICAL MEDICINE

FIG. 22



GRIAMA STOPPER FOR MEDICINE GOURD

KNM: UC 1952: 44E

HEIGHT = 6.5ins

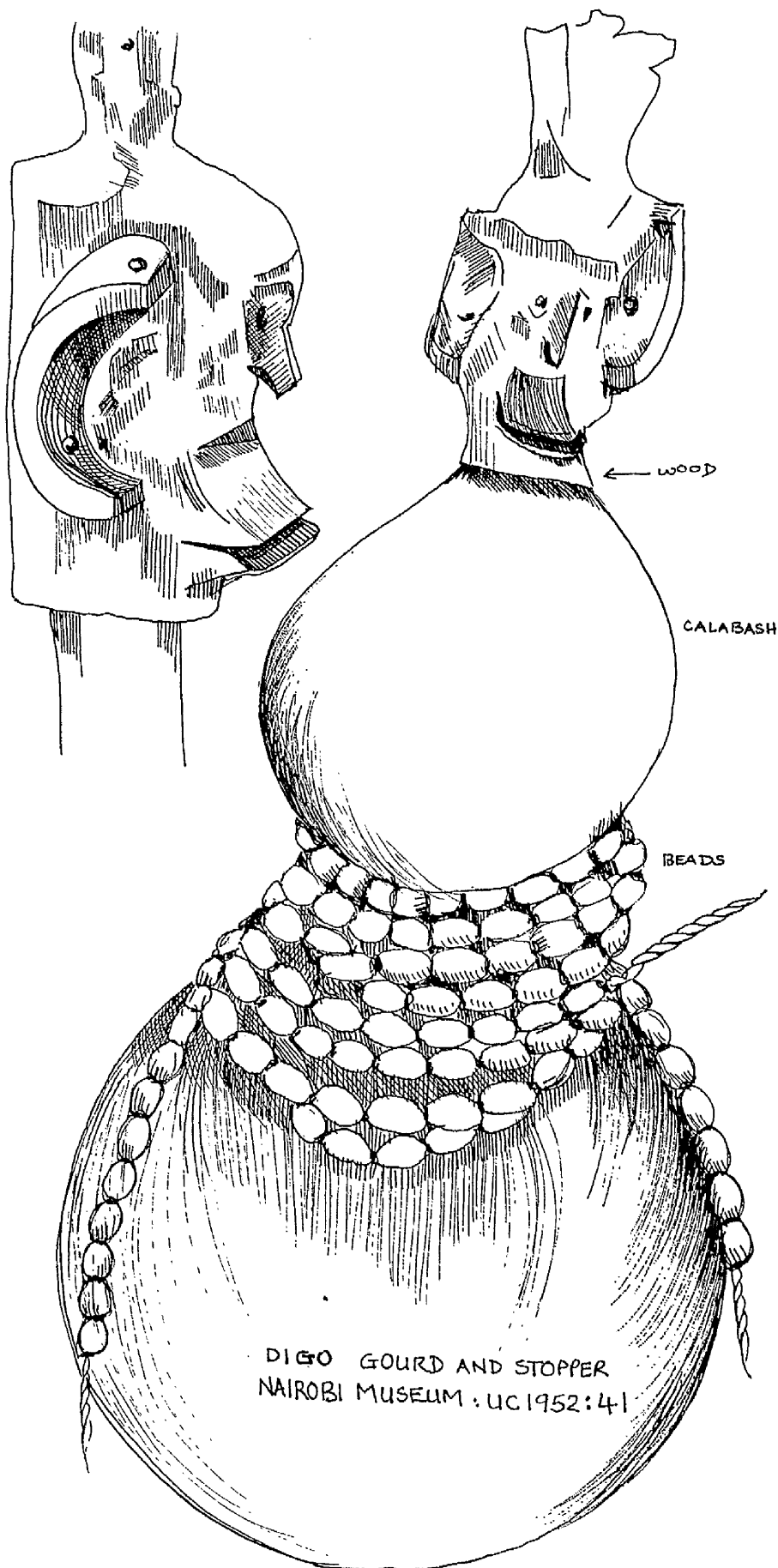
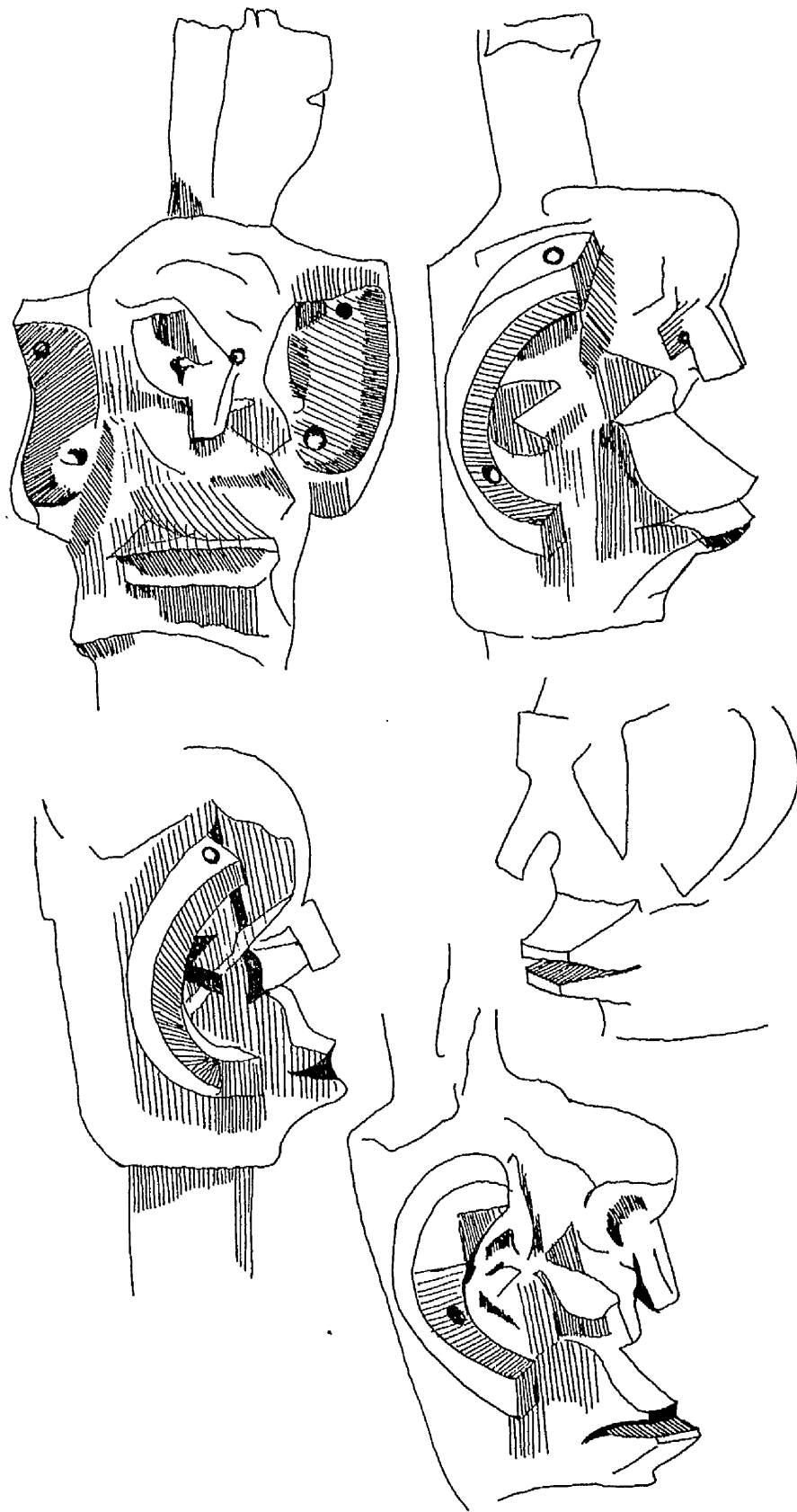


FIG. 24





DIFFERENT PROFILES OF GIRIAMA STOPPER: UC 1952: 41

FIG. 25

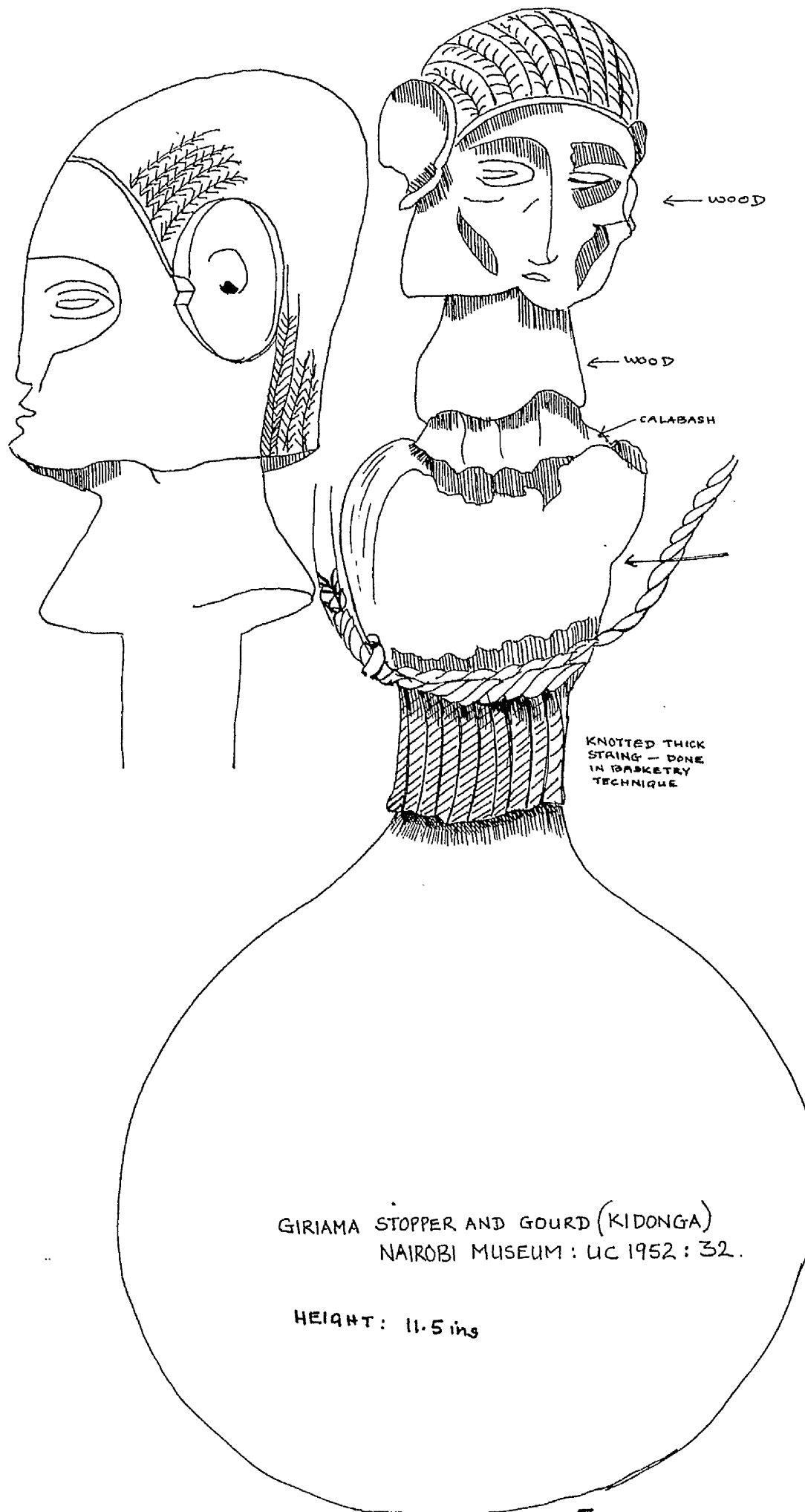
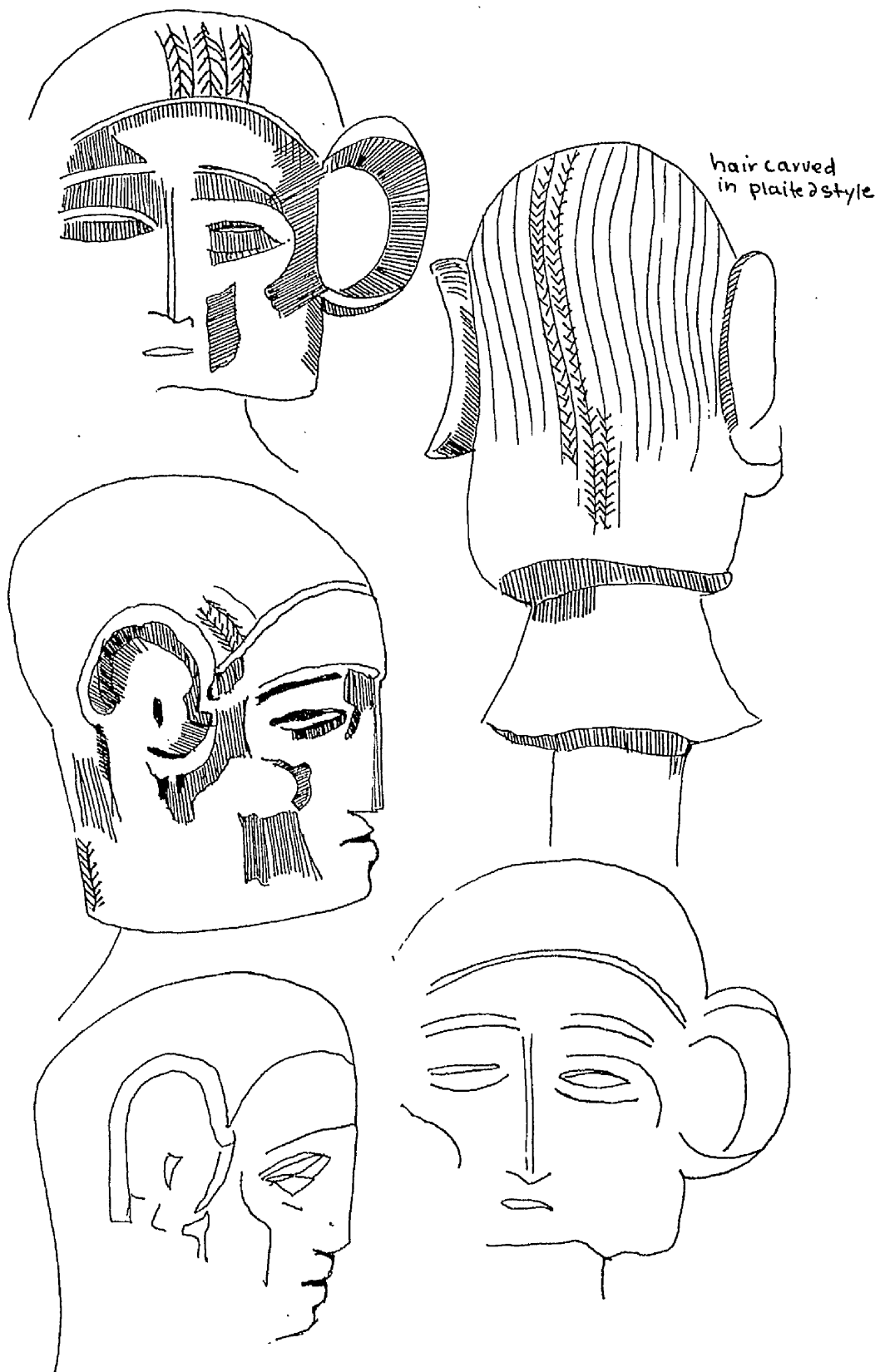
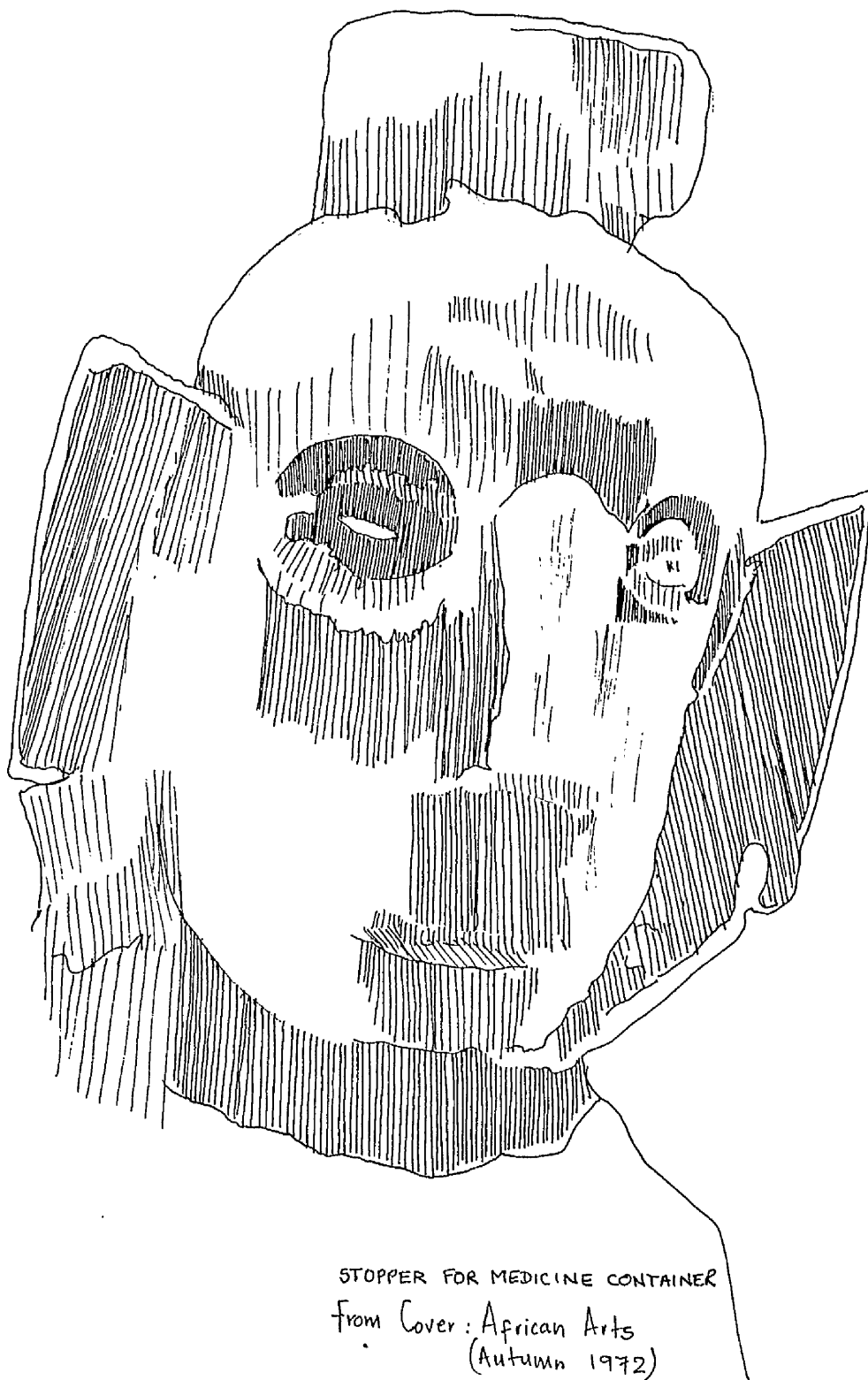


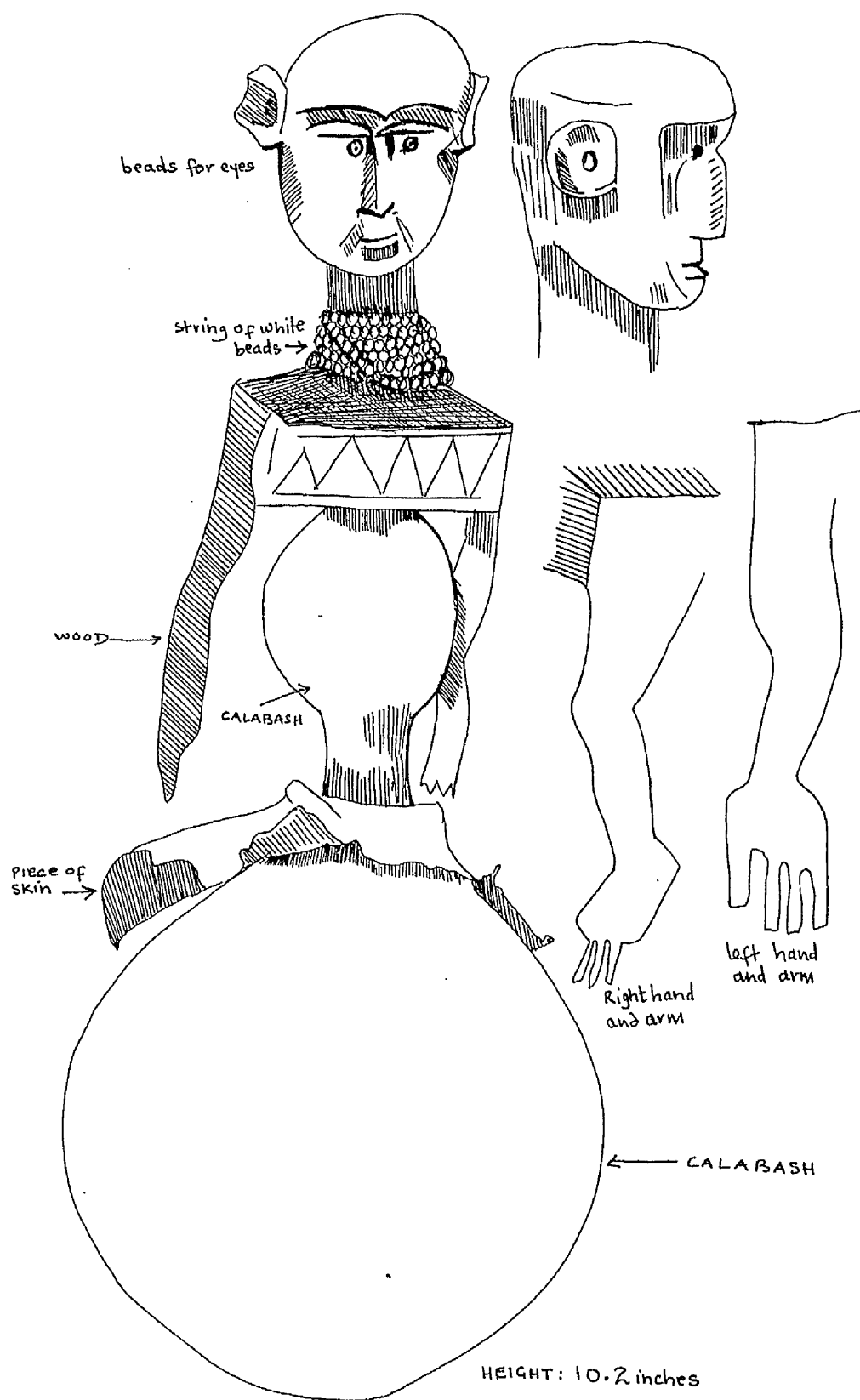
FIG. 26



DIFFERENT PROFILES OF UC1952:32

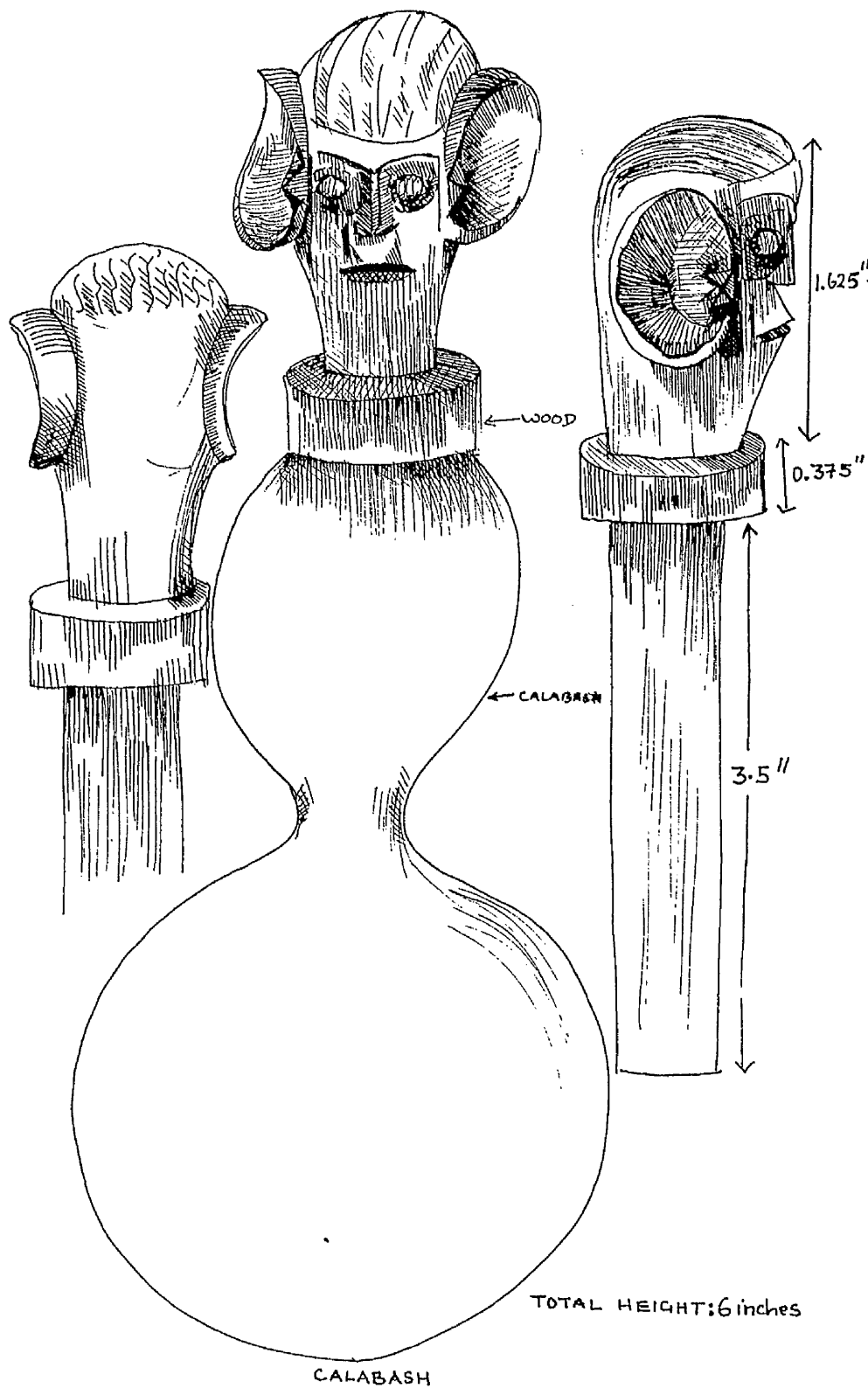


STOPPER FOR MEDICINE CONTAINER  
From Cover: African Arts  
(Autumn 1972)  
(Jean Brown: 1972)



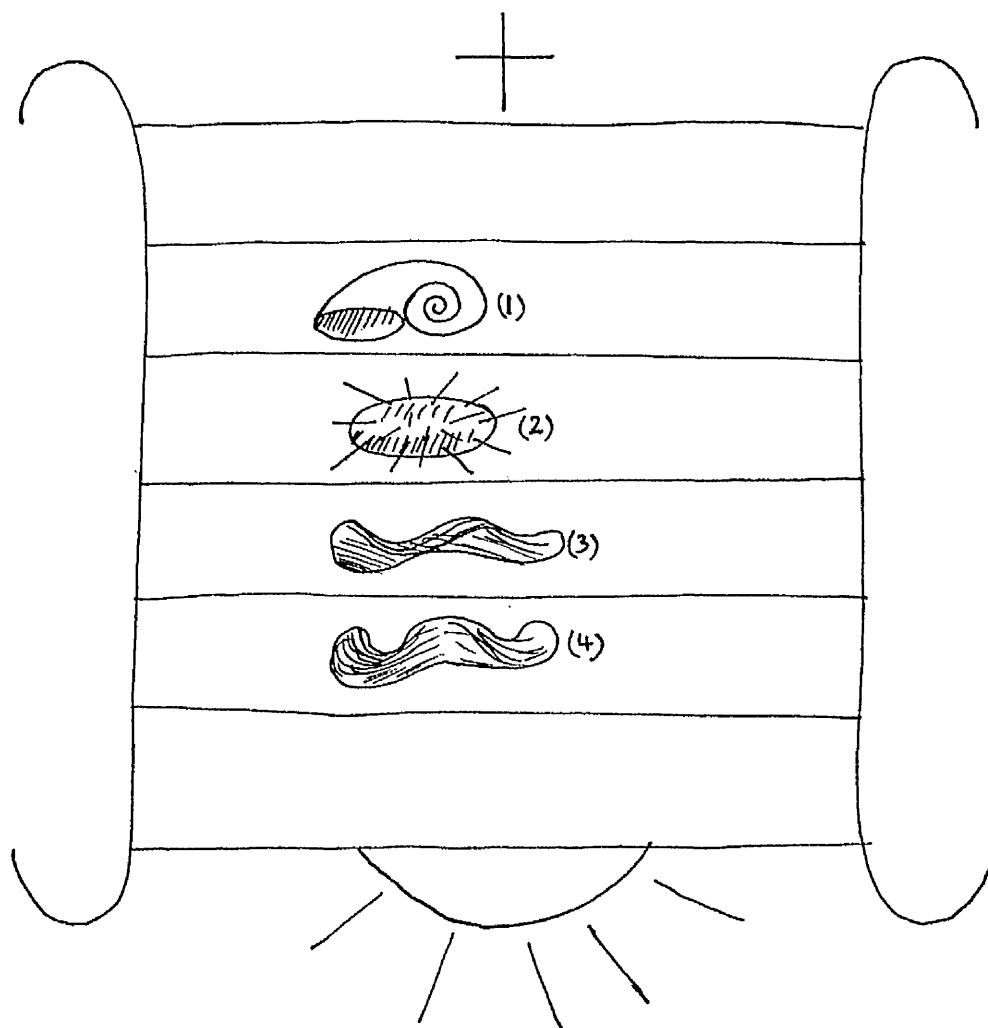
GRIAMA GOURD AND STOPPER: BRITISH MUSEUM: 1915: 7-3: 53.

FIG. 29



MEDICINE CONTAINER WITH WOODEN STOPPER (SCULPTURE)  
MADE BY NYOKA NGALA, 1984 [FIELD RESEARCH].

FIG. 30

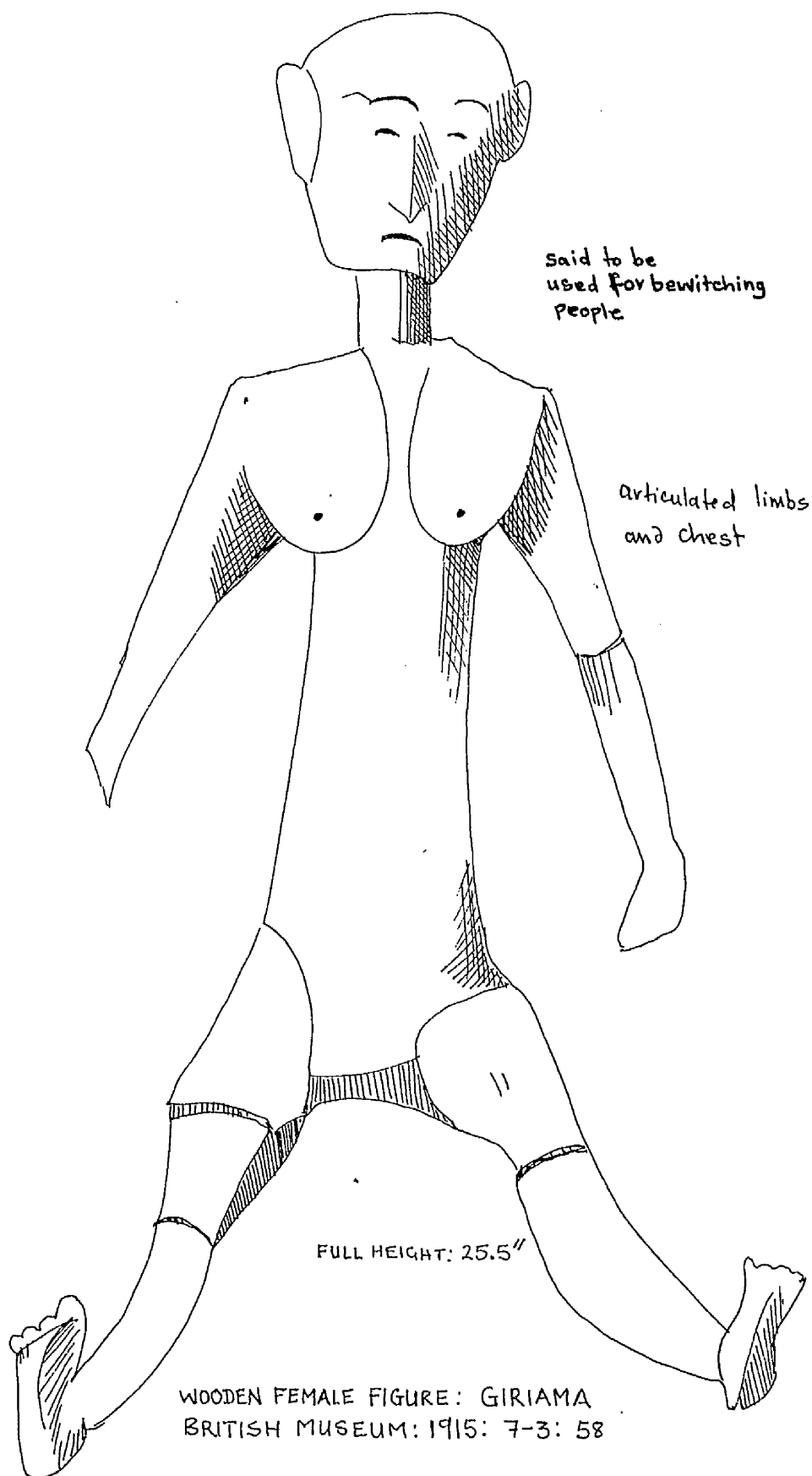


COPY OF "DRAWING" DONE BY MWAMAU HAMISI (APPRENTICE OF FATUMA ABDALLA, HEALER) ON FLOOR OF HEALER'S HOUSE, 1985 USED IN THE TREATMENT OF A WOMAN WHO WAS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY IN BEARING CHILDREN. (SHARIANI, 1.10.85)

THE "DRAWING" WAS DONE WITH ASH. OBJECTS CONSISTED OF:

1. SEA SHELL
2. OVAL OBJECT WITH PORCUPINE QUILLS
3. GNARLED WOOD
4. GNARLED WOOD

FIG. 31

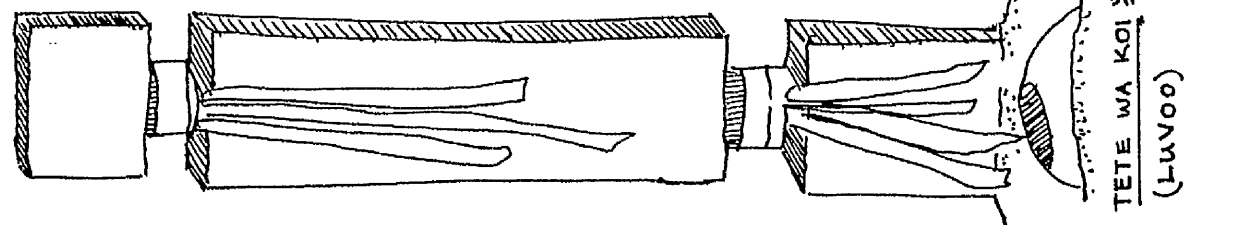
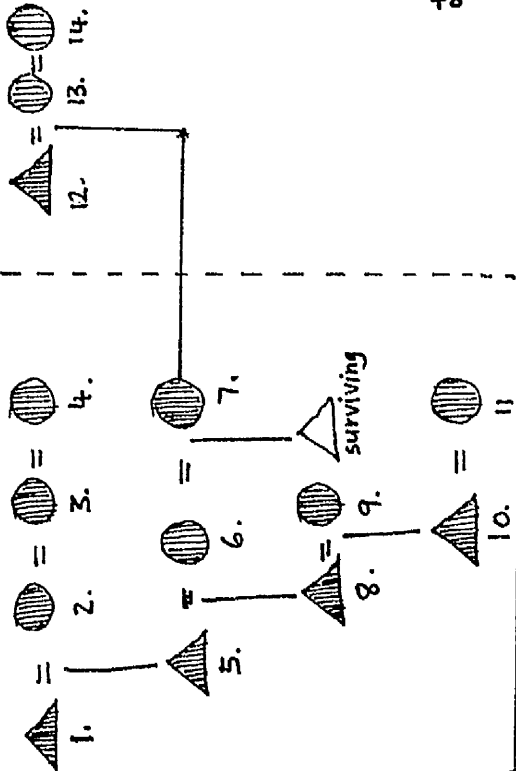


WOODEN FEMALE FIGURE: GIRIAMA  
BRITISH MUSEUM: 1915: 7-3: 58

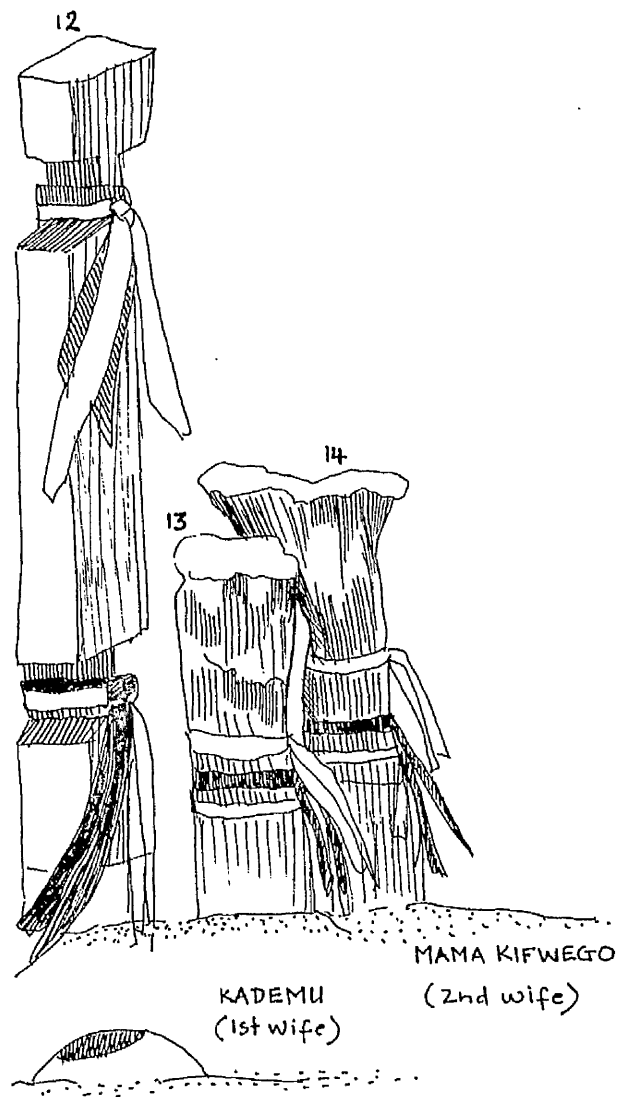
FIG. 32



KINSHIP DIAGRAM



PAGE 48 FIG. 33



MENZA WA TUVA (MULAI WA KABAO'S MATERNAL GRANDFATHER)  
(LUVDO)

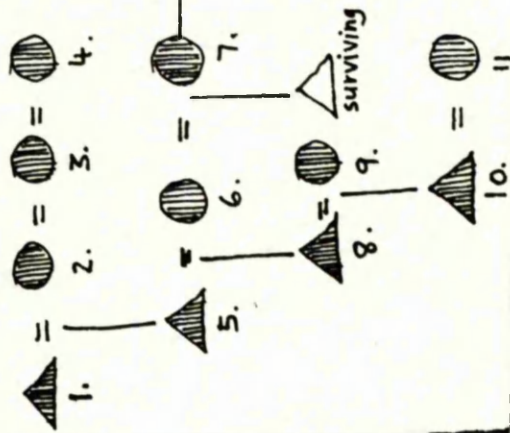
MEMORIALS AT MULAI WA KABAO'S HOME, 1984

FIG. 34

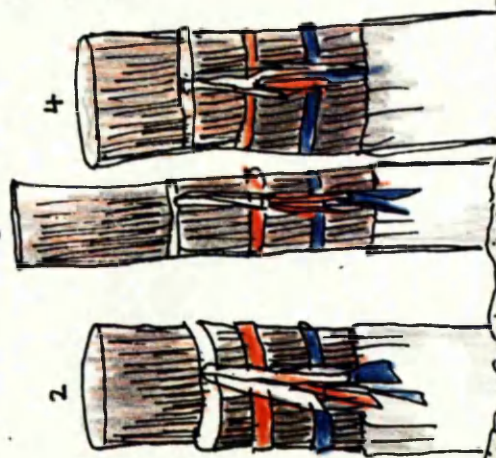
MIKOMA AND VIBAO AT MULAI WA KABAO'S  
HOME, SHARIANI, 1984.

KEY	MALE	FEMALE
	SHUKA	HANDO
	Mukumbuu	KADZILIRAI
	Kitambi	KANIKI

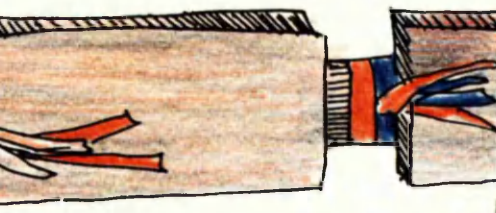
KINSHIP DIAGRAM



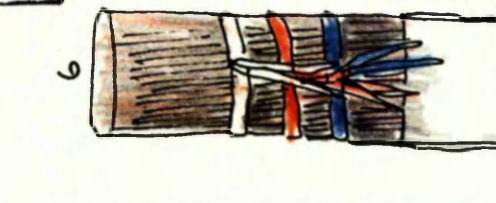
TETE WA KOI  
(LUVUO)



NONJE KEHENU  
2nd wife  
3rd wife



KABAD WA TETE  
(LUVUO)



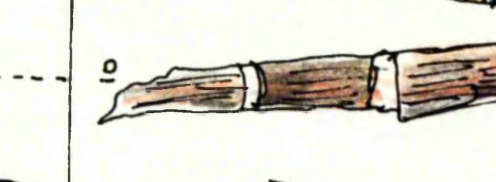
MUKAMBE  
2nd wife



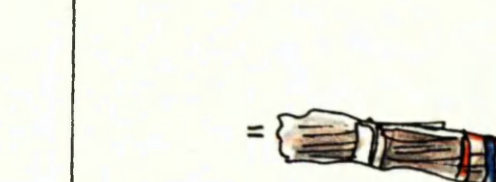
SADA



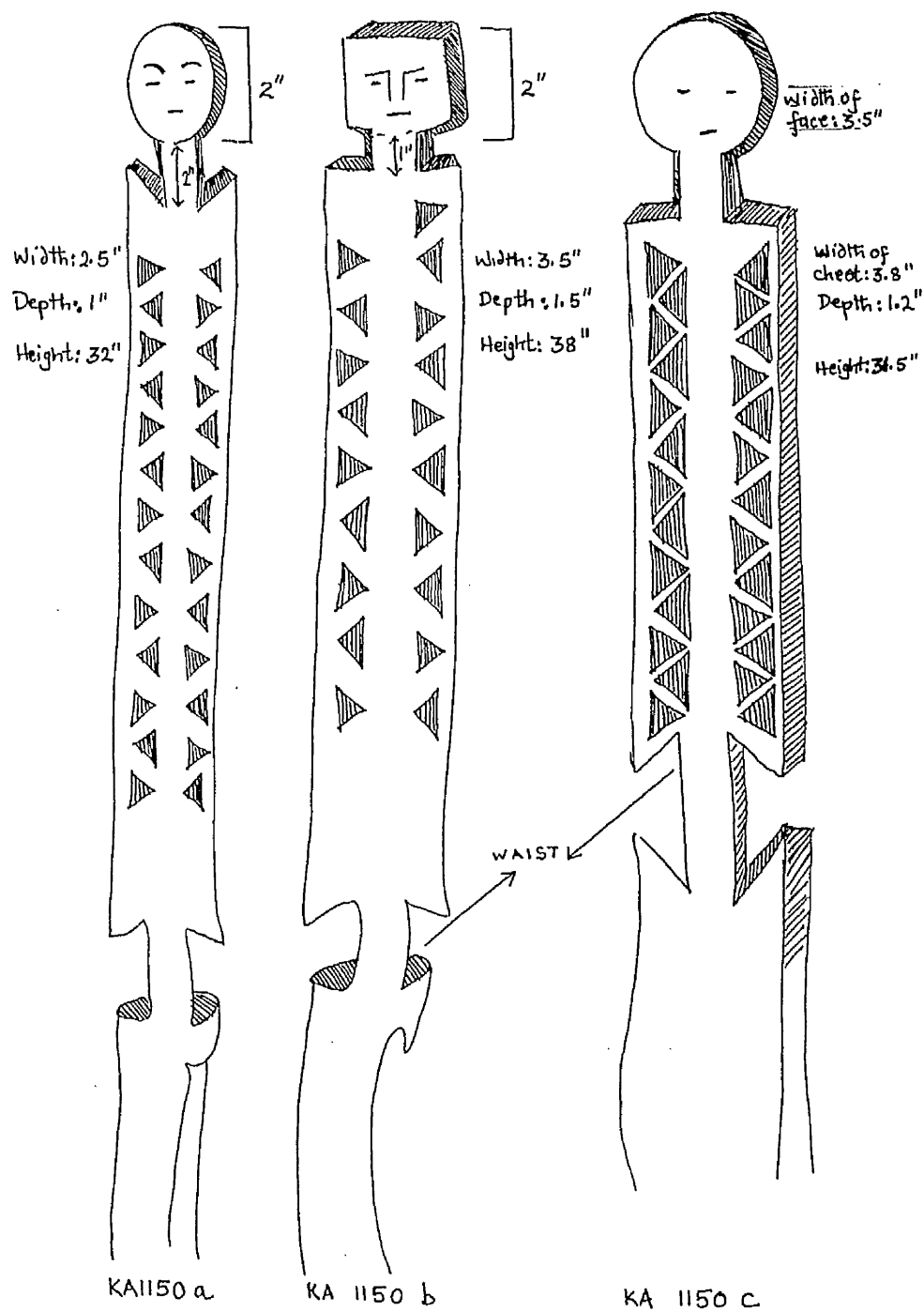
MADUNA  
WIFE OF  
WA TETE



KOI  
WA TETE



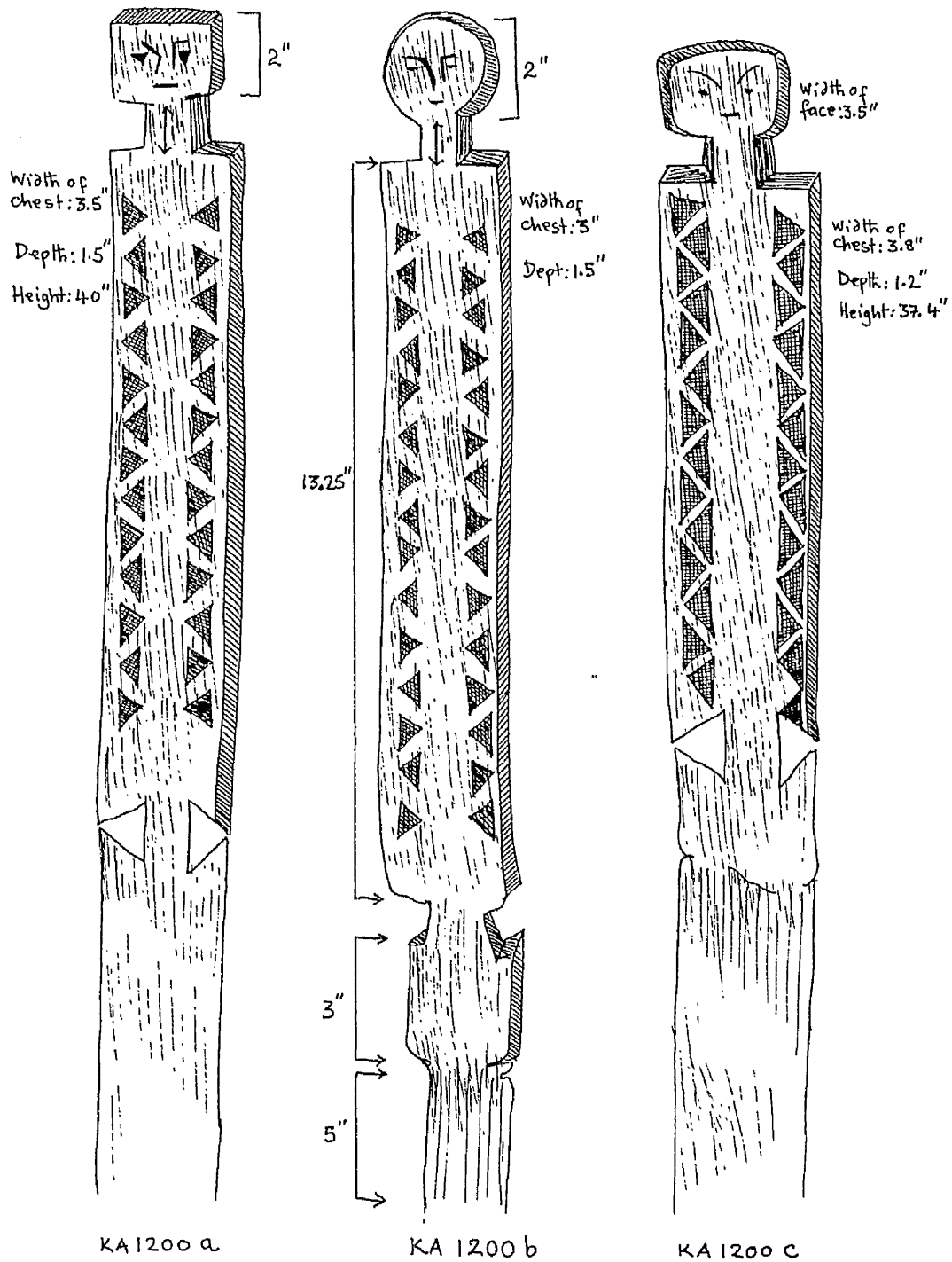
WIFE OF  
TETE



GIRIAMA VIGANGO : AFRICAN HERITAGE, NAIROBI

COST: KA 1150 a : shs 750 (1 sterling £ = 23 shs : 1985)  
 KA 1150 b : shs 750  
 KA 1150 c : shs 600

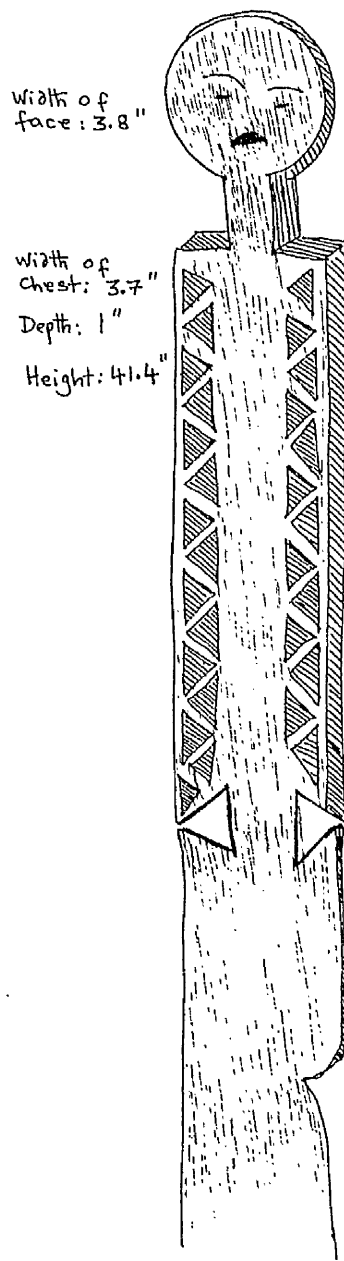
FIG.36



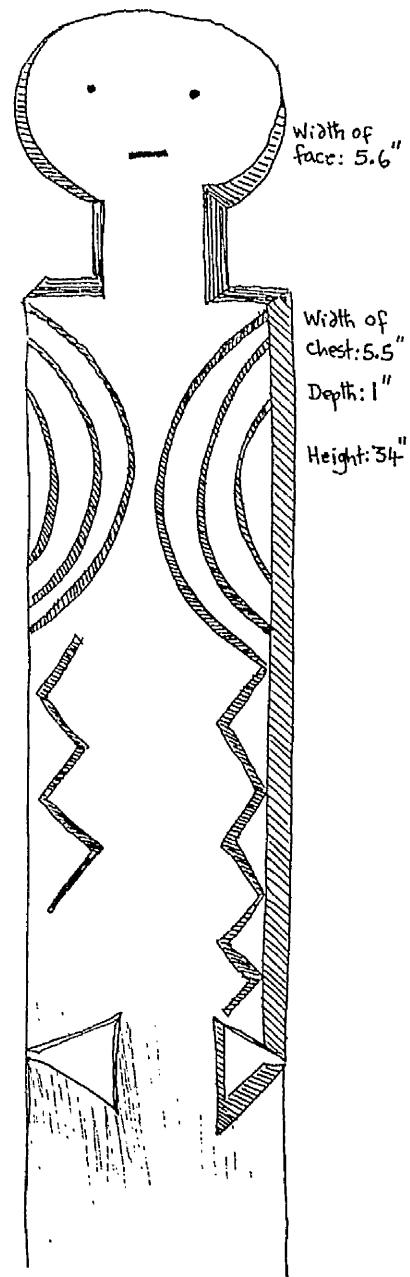
GIRIAMA VIGANGO : AFRICA HERITAGE, NAIROBI

COST : KA 1200 a : Shs 1,200 (1 sterling £ = 23 shs)  
KA 1200 b (not priced)  
KA 1200 c : Shs 750.

FIG.37



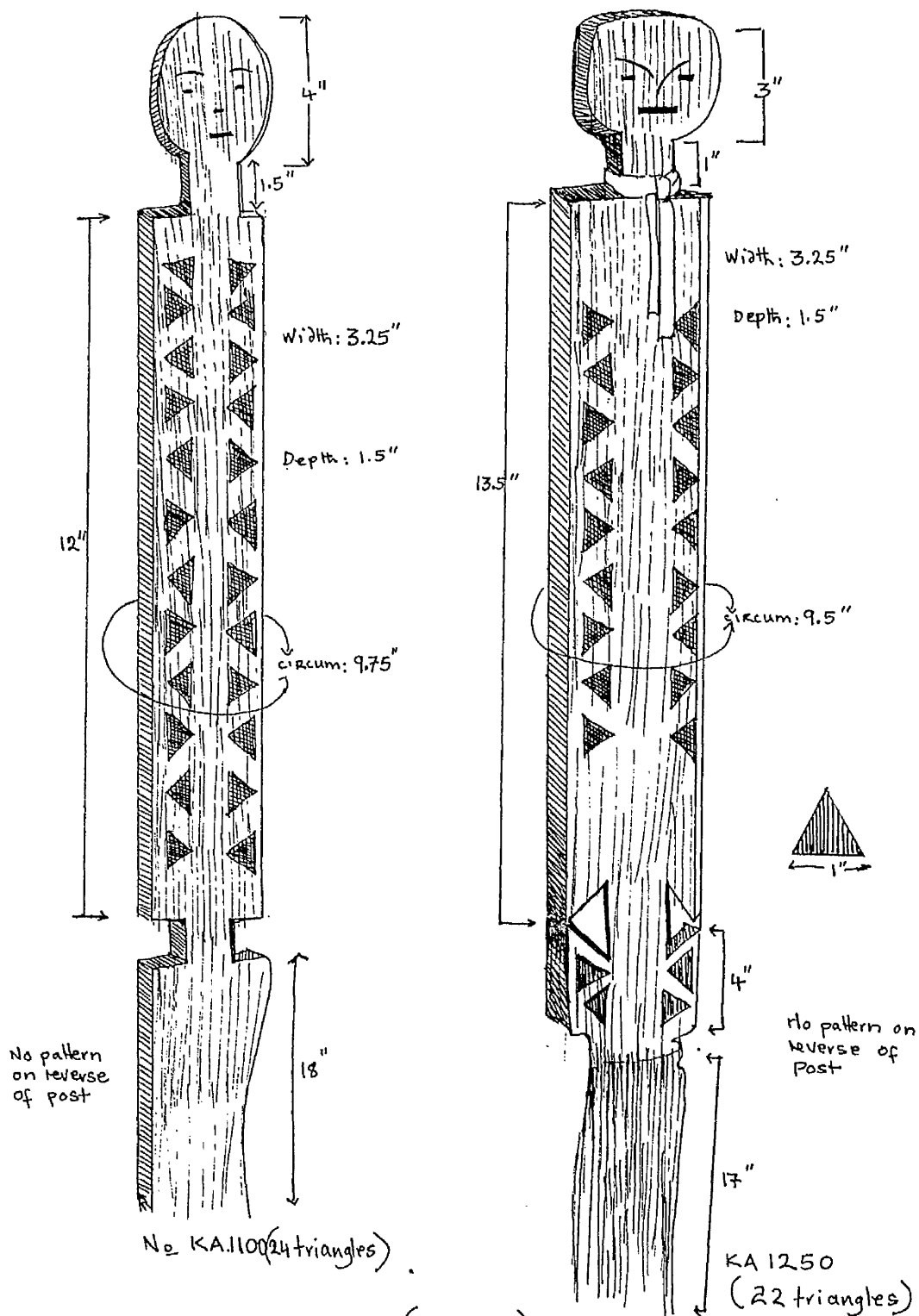
KA 1250 a



KA 1250 b

GIRIAMA VIGANGO: AFRICAN HERITAGE, NAIROBI

COST : KA 1250 a (not priced) KA 1250 b: Shs 750



No KA 1100 (24 triangles)

KA 1250  
(22 triangles)

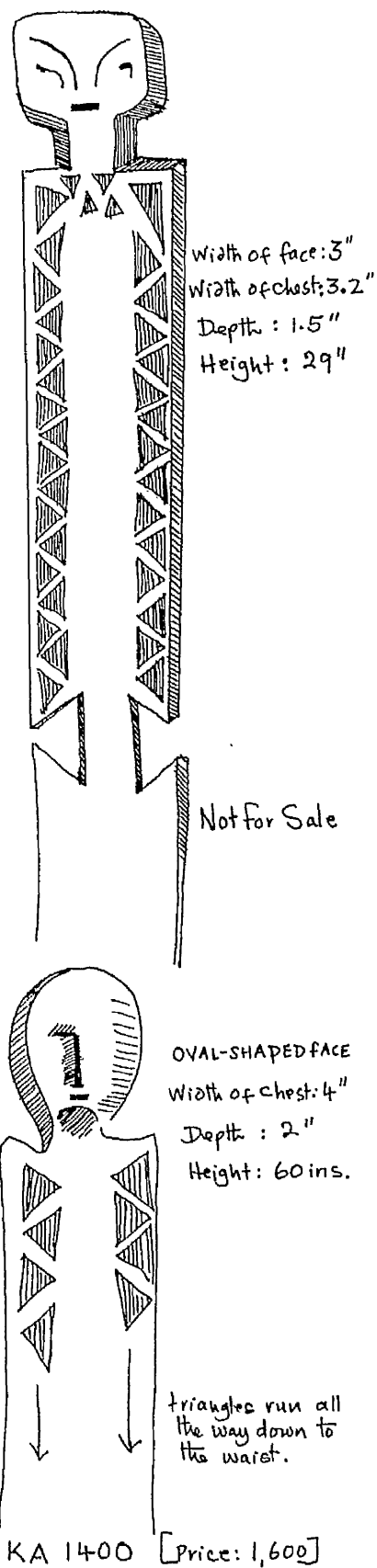
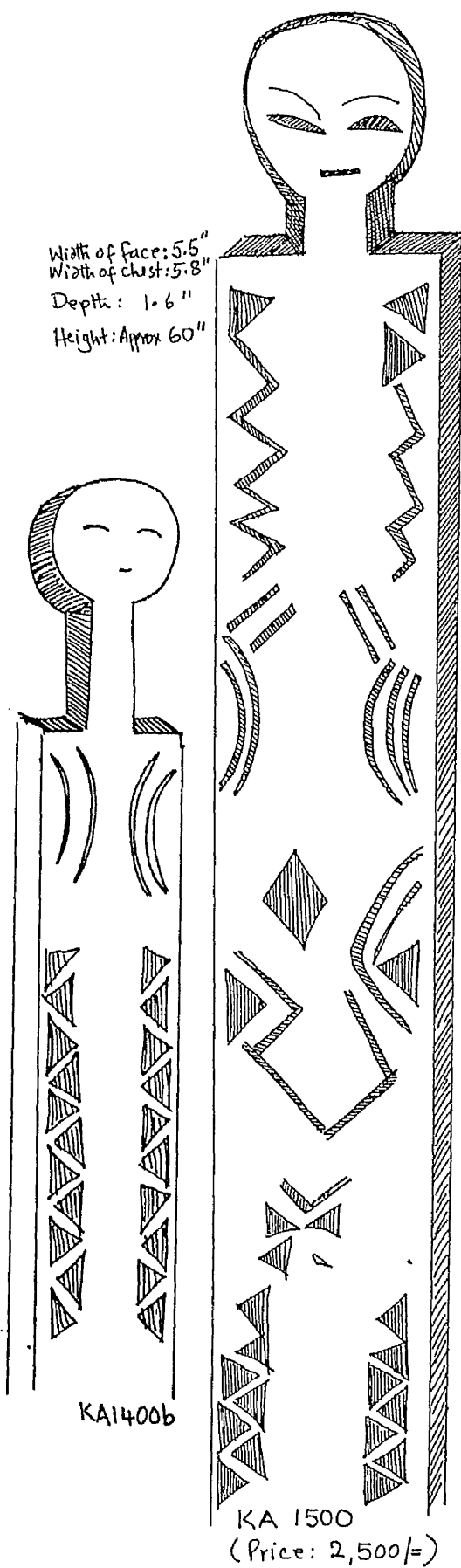
MIJIKENDA VIGANGO (GIRIAMA)  
AFRICAN HERITAGE (NAIROBI): KA 110 and KA 1250

KA 1100: Measurements: Width: 3.25", Depth: 1.5", Height: 35.5"

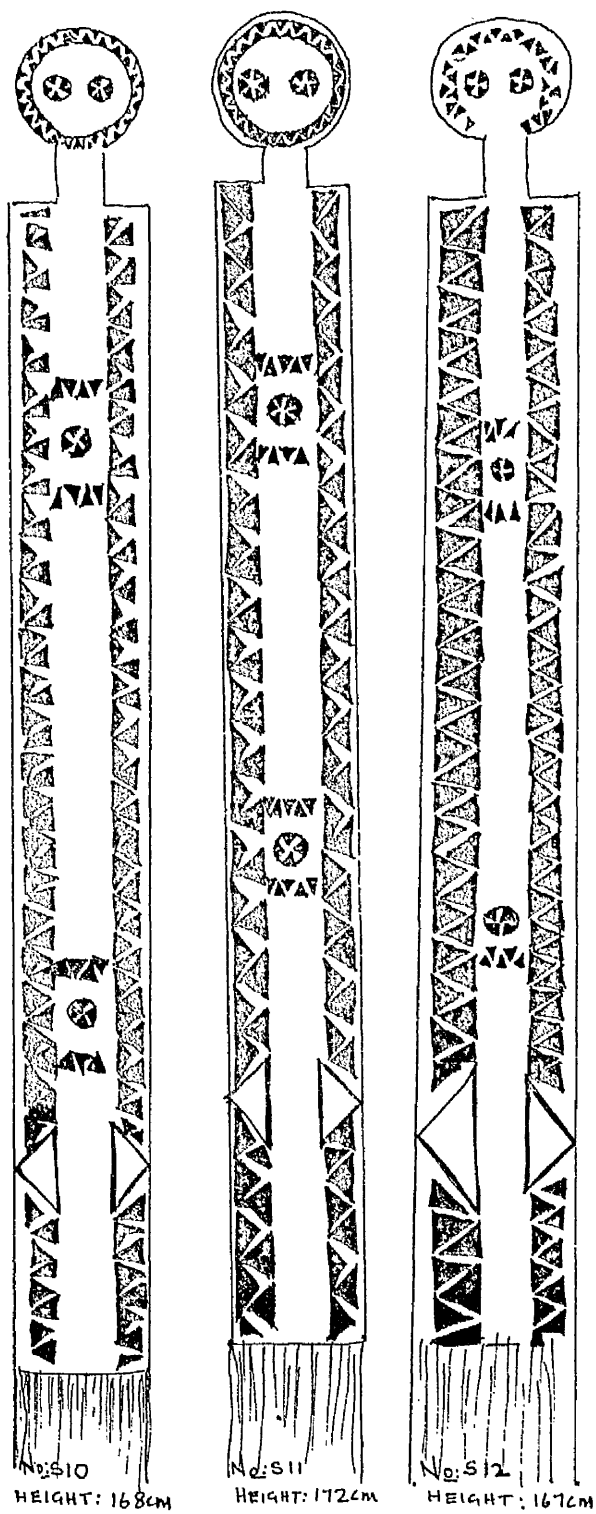
KA 1250: Measurements: Width: 3.25", Depth: 1.5", Height: 48.5"

FIG. 39







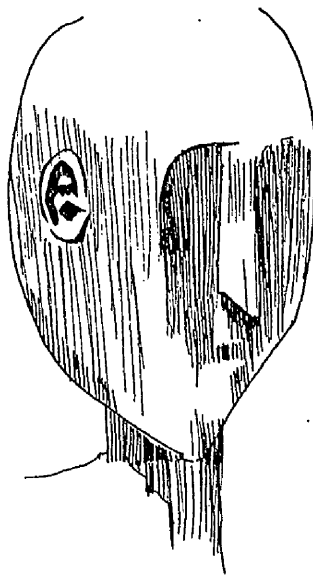


VIGANGO (FROM: ERNIE WOLFE : 1979: Page 30)

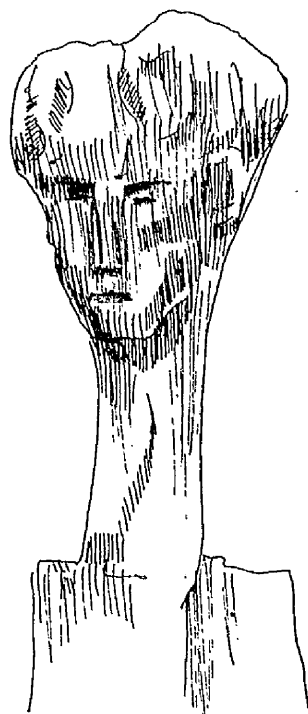
FIG. 41



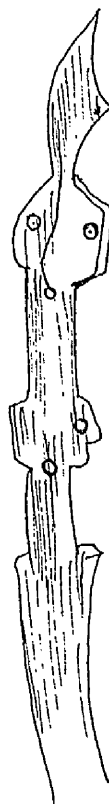
RIBE KIGANGO  
(from BROWN: 1980: 37)



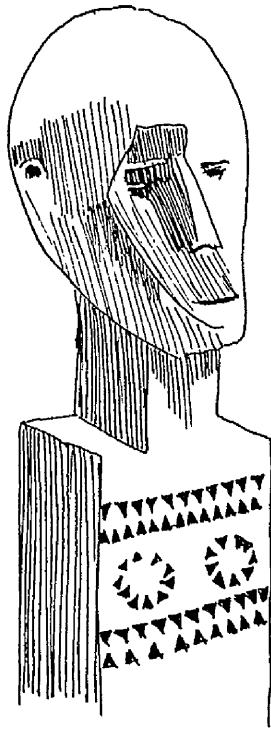
RIBE KIGANGO  
(from BROWN: 1980: 38)



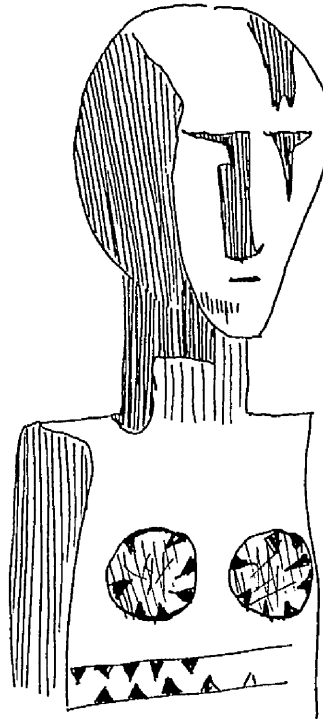
RIBE KIGANGO  
(from Adamson: 1957: 255)  
Tafel XX



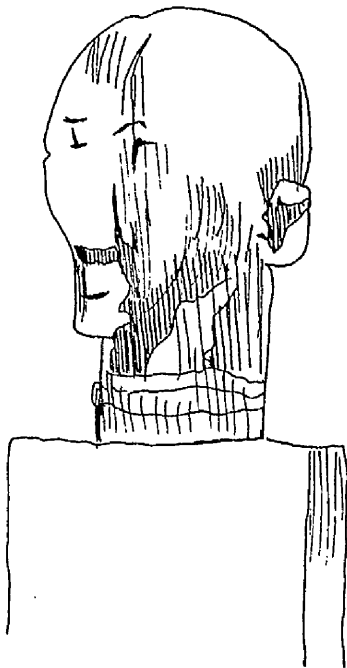
RIBE KIGANGO.  
(from Adamson: 1957: 255)



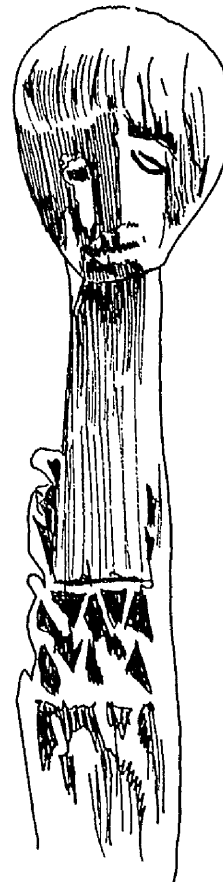
KAMBE KIGANGO  
(FROM BROWN: 1980:36)



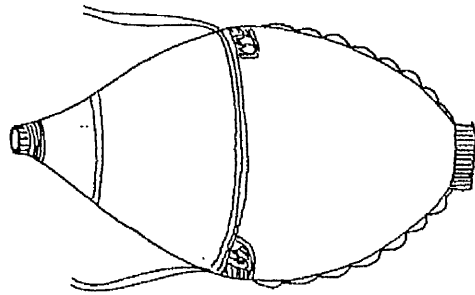
KAMBE KIGANGO  
(FROM BROWN 1980:39)



KAMBE KIGANGO  
(FROM BROWN: 1980:39)

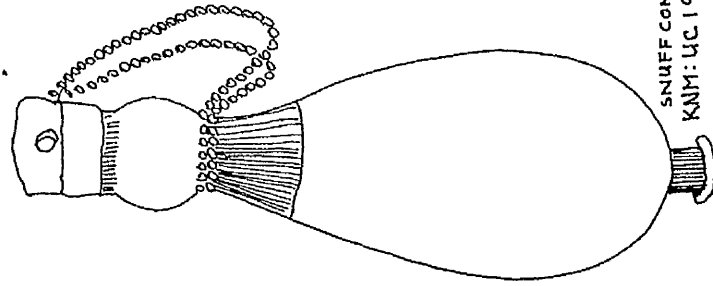


KAMBE (?) KIGANGO  
(FROM SIROTO: 1979: 109)



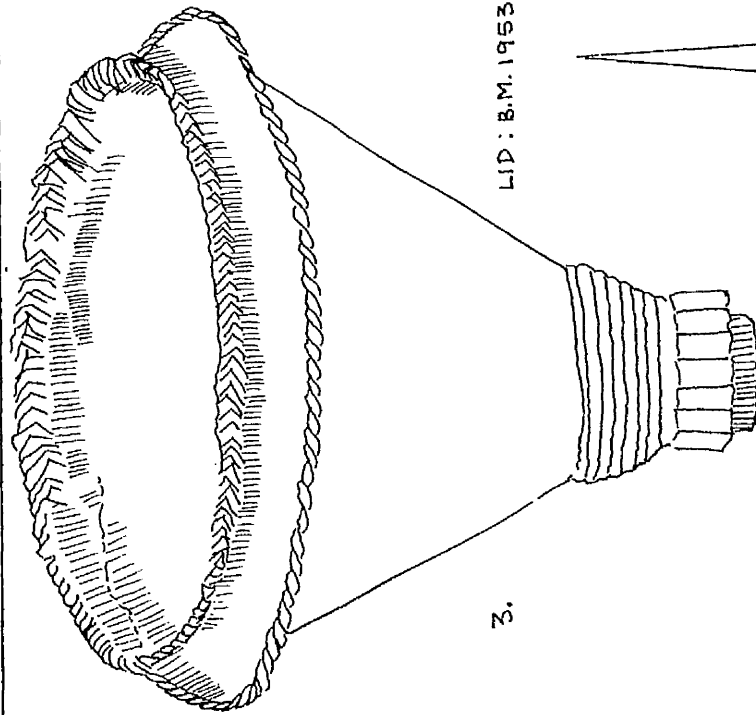
BASKET: B.M.1953: Af: 25-50

1.



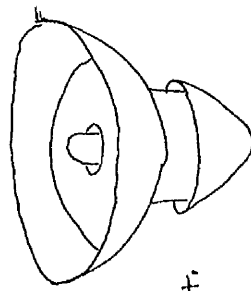
SNUFF CONTAINER  
KNM: UC1969: 886

2.

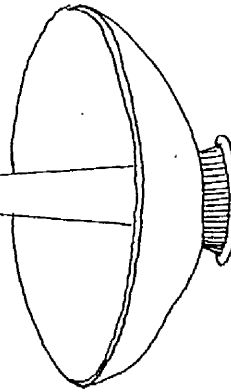


LID: B.M.1953: Af: 25-50

3.



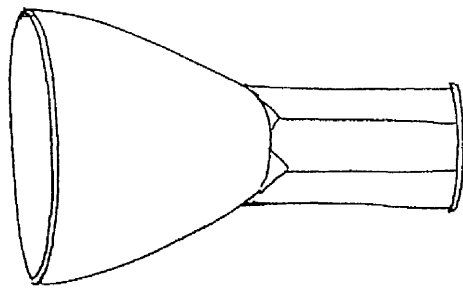
4.



5.

EARPLUGS: KNM: UC1968: 386A

KNM: UC1969: 57a



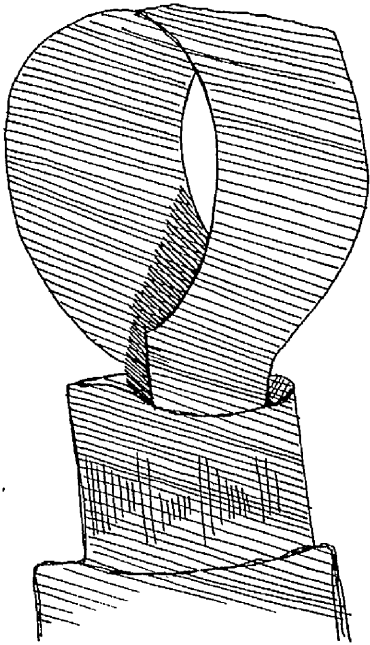
MORTAR

6.

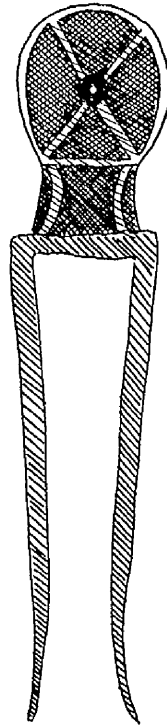
SIMILARITIES IN OVERALL SHAPES

1 and 2 : basket and snuff container shapes are similar  
3, 4, 5 and 6; overall shapes similar.

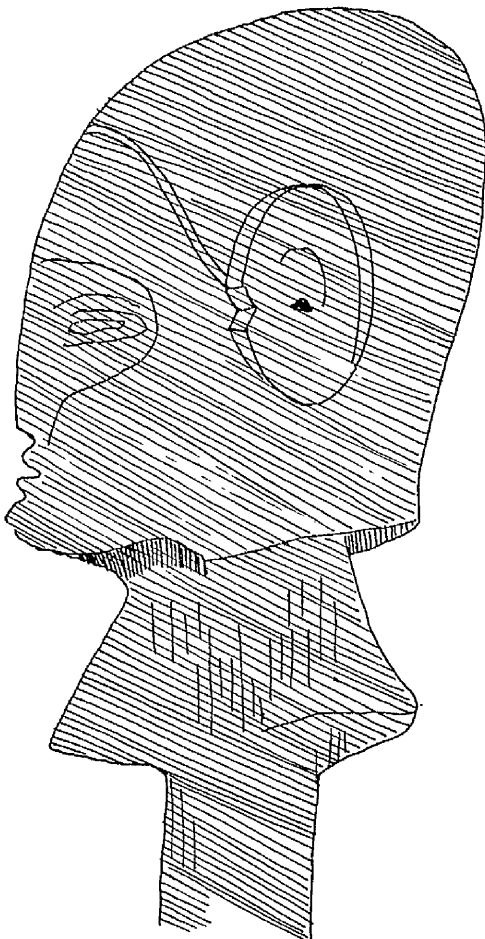
## SIMILARITIES IN DIFFERENT FORMS



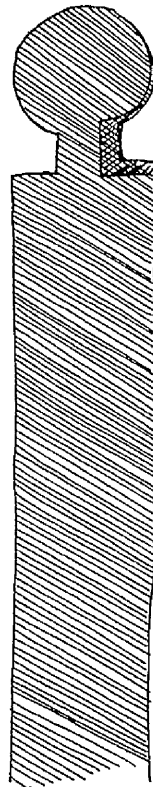
GOUGE (KNM:UC1969:47)



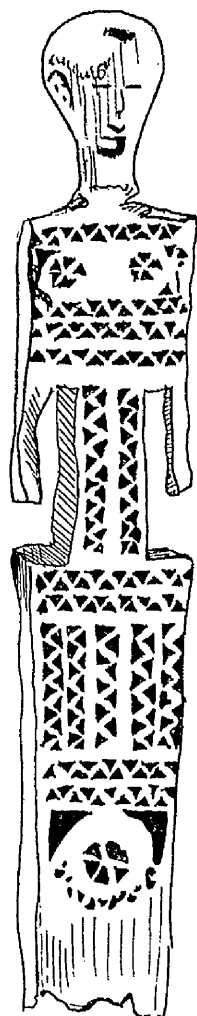
TWEEZERS (KNM:UC1968:406)



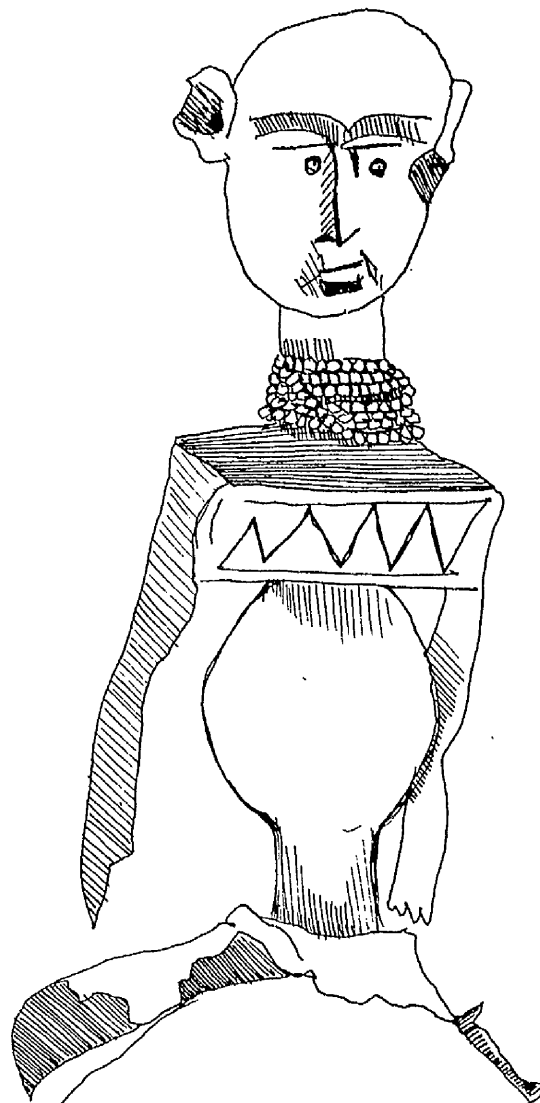
STOPPER (KNM:UC1952:32)



KIGANGO

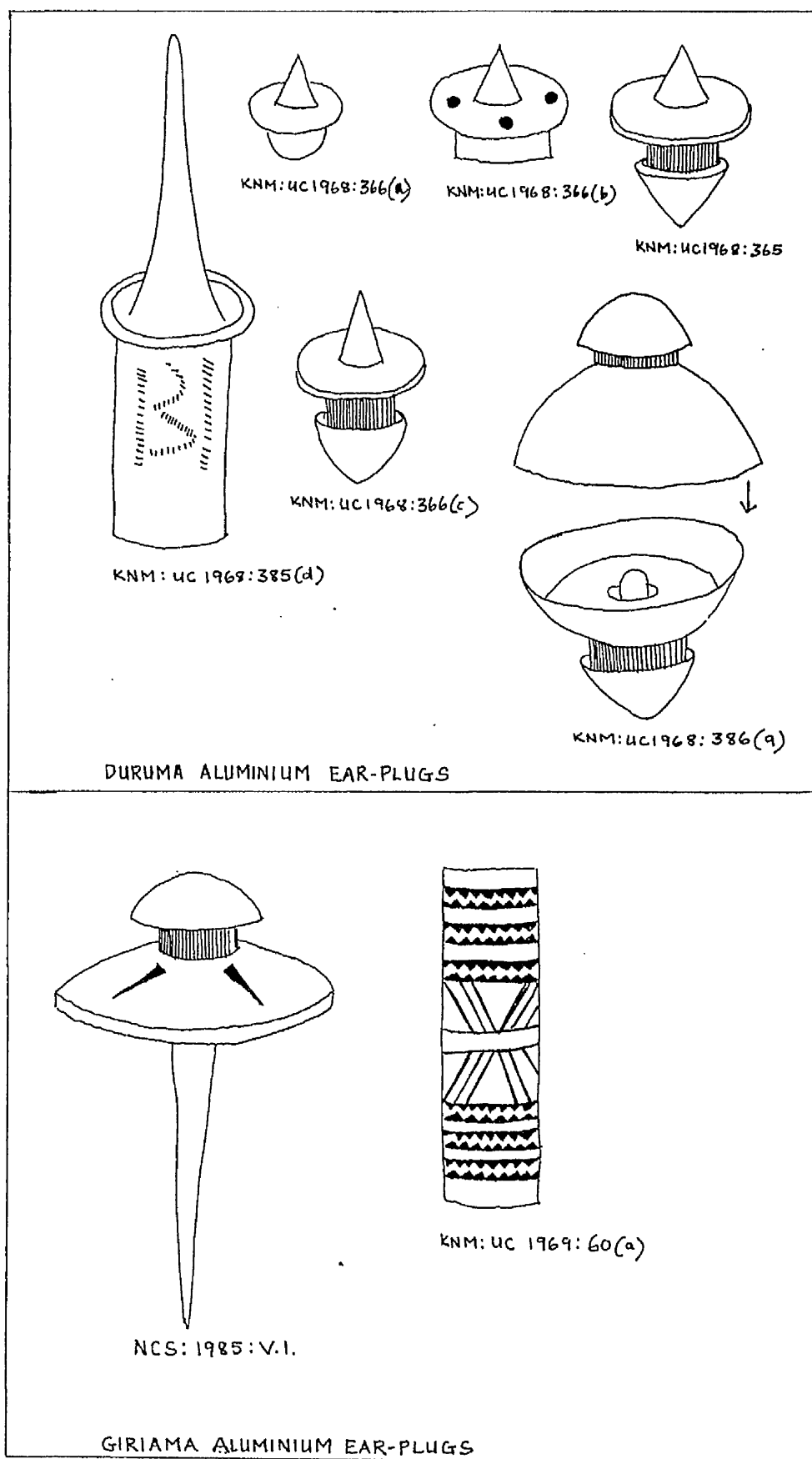


Kigango (Kambe?)  
(Sivoto: 1979:107)



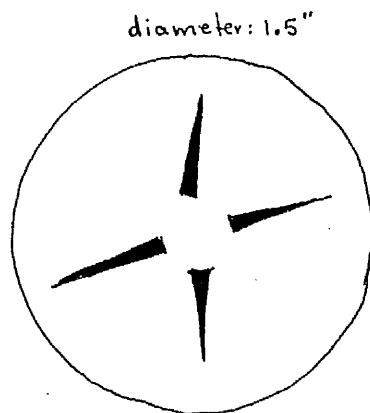
GIRIAMA GOURD AND STOPPER:  
BRITISH MUSEUM: 1915:7-3:53

KIGANGO AND STOPPER. SHOWING SIMILARITY OF FORM

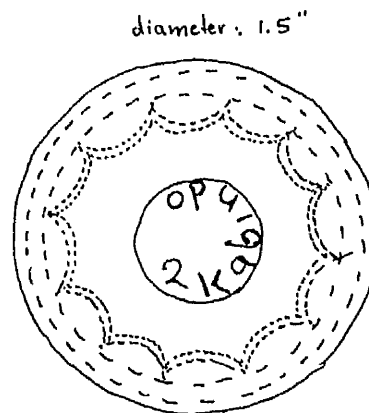


STYLISTIC SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

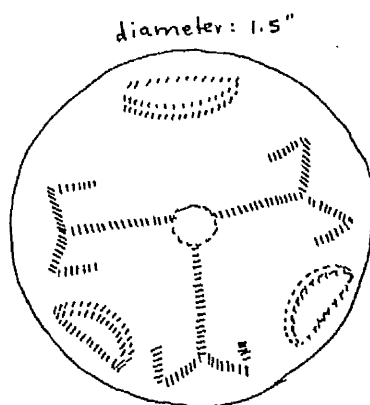
FIG. 47



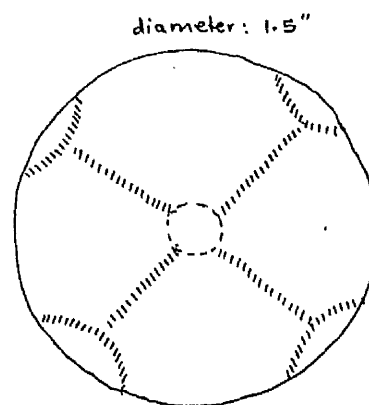
NCS:1985: V.1.



V.2



V. 3



V. 4

Patterns on Vifufu (aluminium spike earrings).

1: Ebony wood (black) inlaid outside and inside surfaces

2: Incised pattern with the number "2" and name "Kabindo"  
— outside surface only.

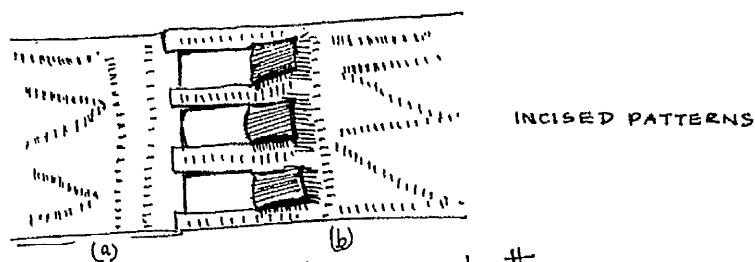
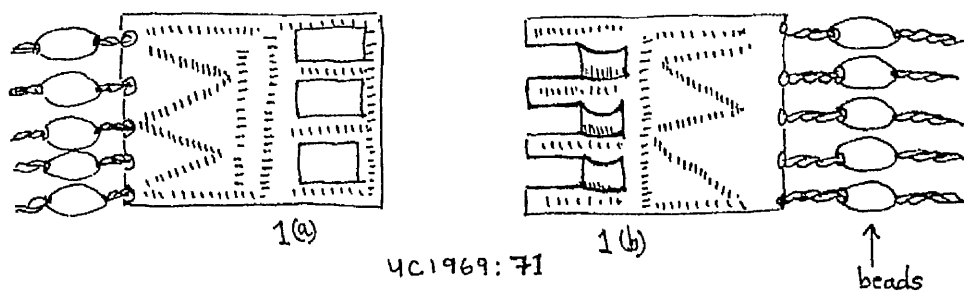
3. and 4: Patterns on inside surfaces only.

NCS:1985: V.1, 2, 3 and 4

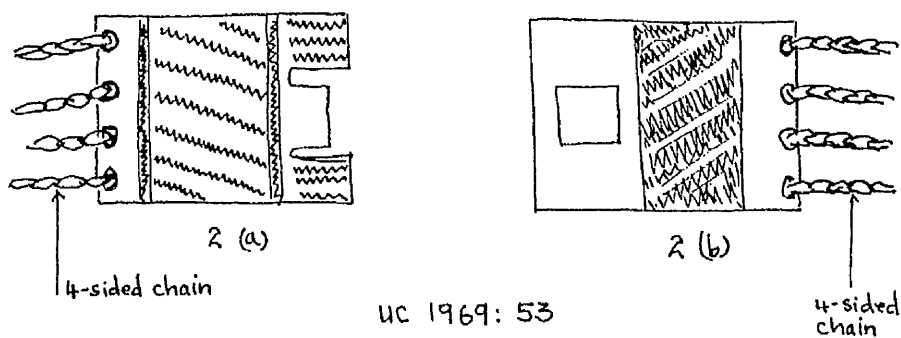
(THESE VIFUFU WERE FOUND IN A CURIO-STALL  
SPECIALISING IN SELLING OLD OBJECTS. (NAIROBI), 1985

FIG. 48





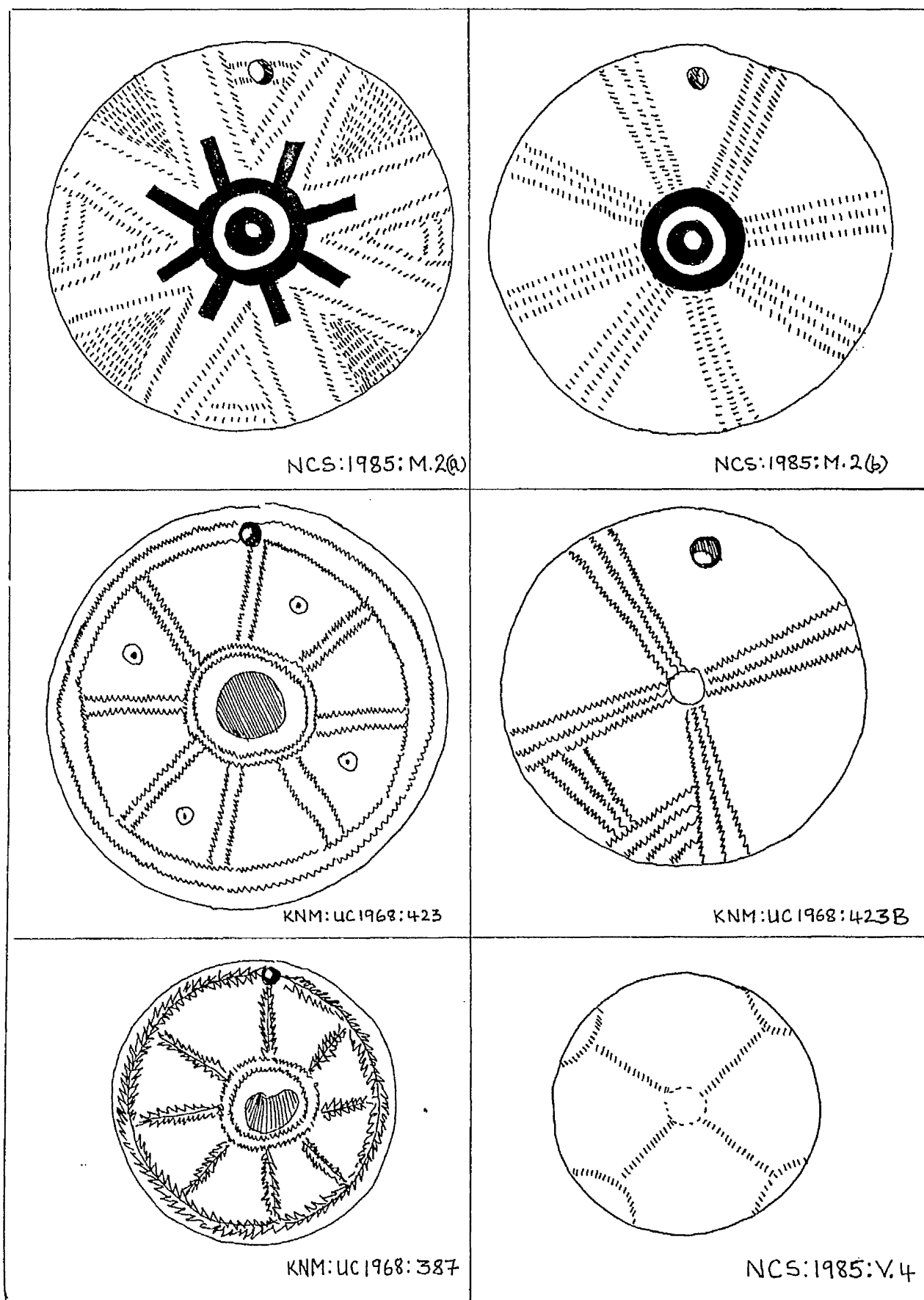
The two sections clasp together  
to lie flush on each other



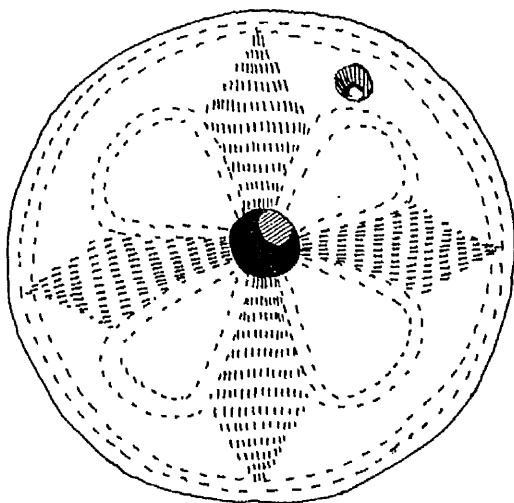
GIRIAMA-MADE ALUMINIUM INCISED CLASPS (VIBAMBA)  
KNM: (NAIROBI MUSEUM): UC 1969: 53, 71.

TYPES OF INCISED PATTERNS USED BY THE MIJIKENDA

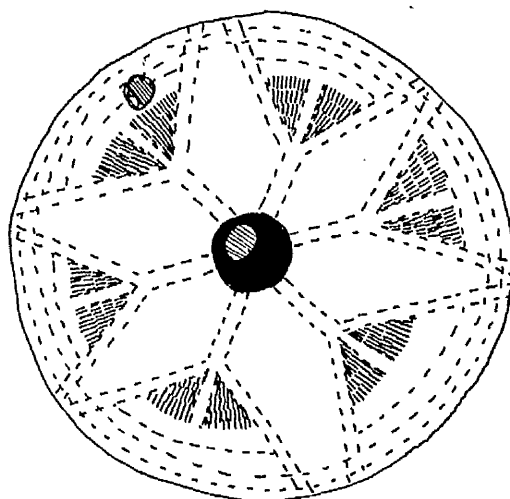
FIG. 49



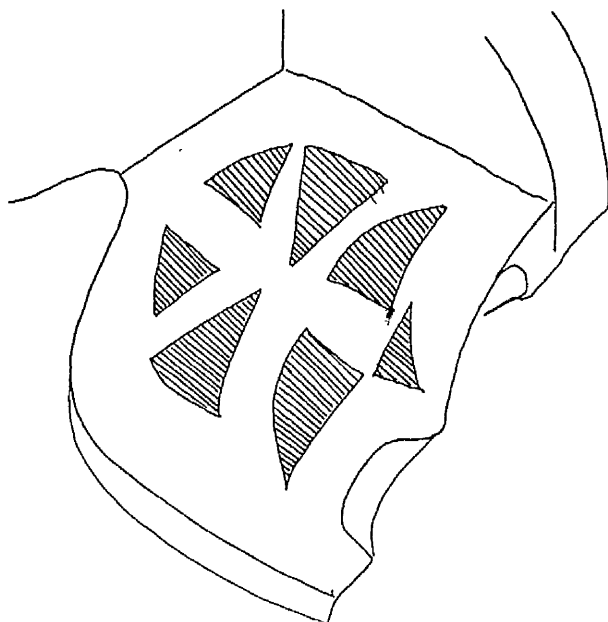
TYPES OF PATTERNS USED BY THE MIJIKENDA  
Fig. 50



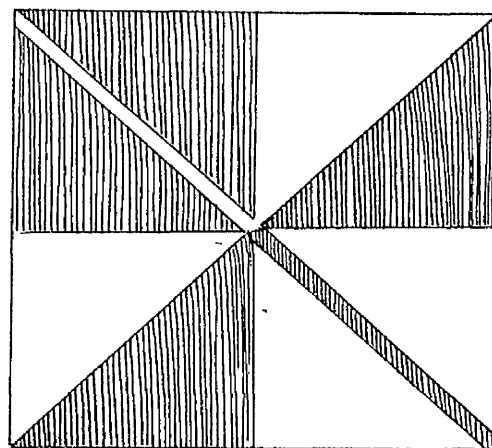
ALUMINIUM DISC (NCS:1985:M.1.a)



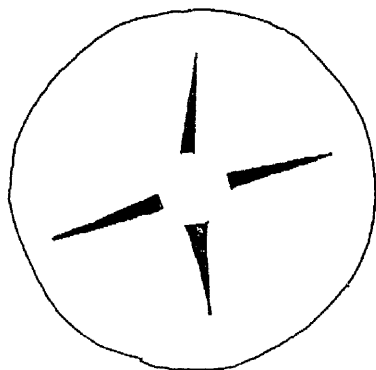
ALUMINIUM DISC (NCS:1985:M.1.b)



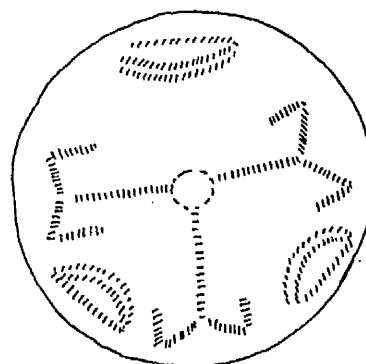
STOOL (KNM: UC 1969: 46)



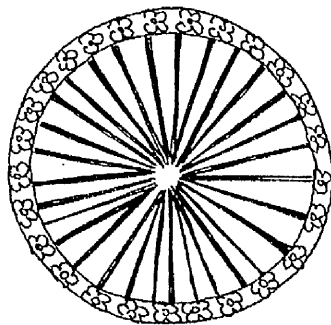
BEADWORK (KNM: UC 1968: 358b)



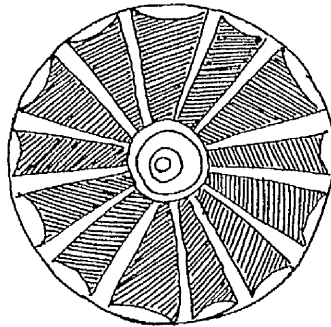
EAR-RING (NCS: 1985: V.1)



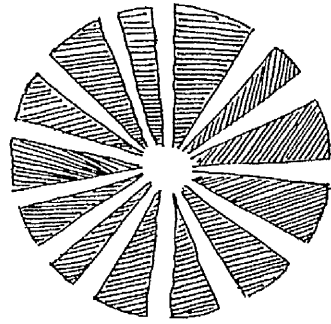
EAR-RING (NCS: 1985: V.3)



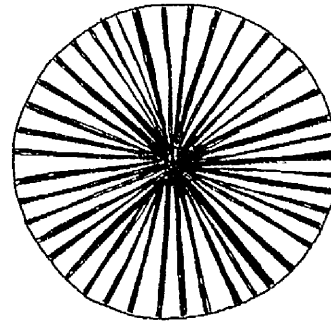
INDIAN  
(ATIL: 1985: 67)



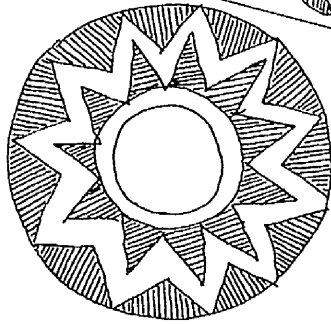
INDIAN  
(ATIL: 1985: 30)



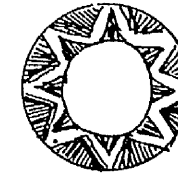
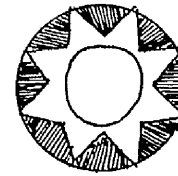
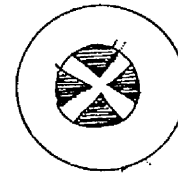
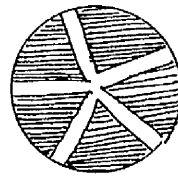
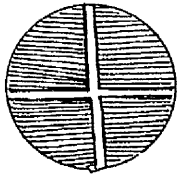
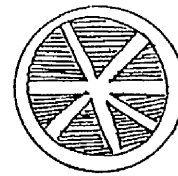
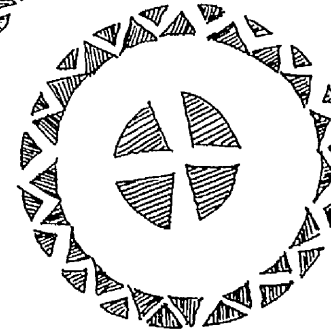
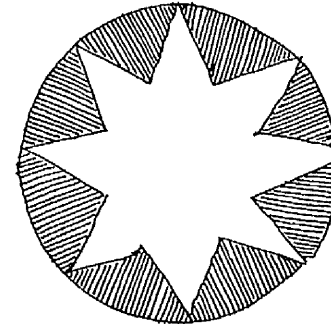
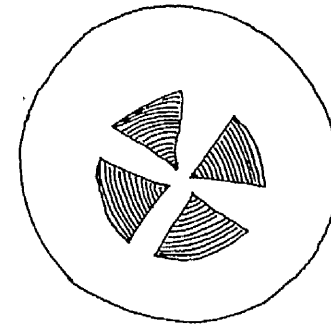
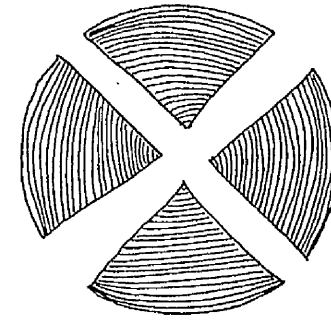
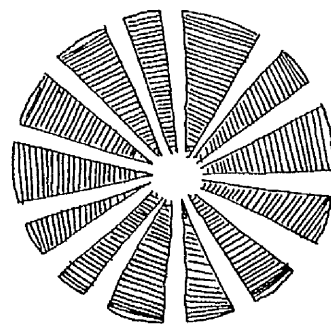
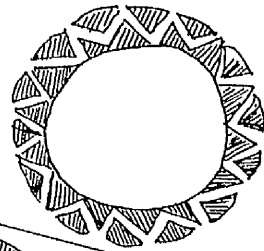
BONI  
(KNM: UN1971d)



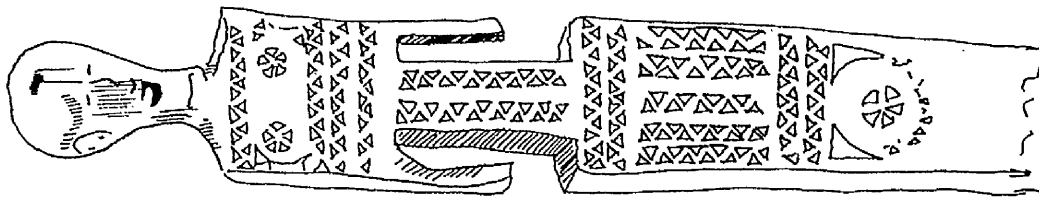
SWAHILI  
(BRAYMANN: 1983: III)



NUBIAN  
(WENZEL: 1972: 114)

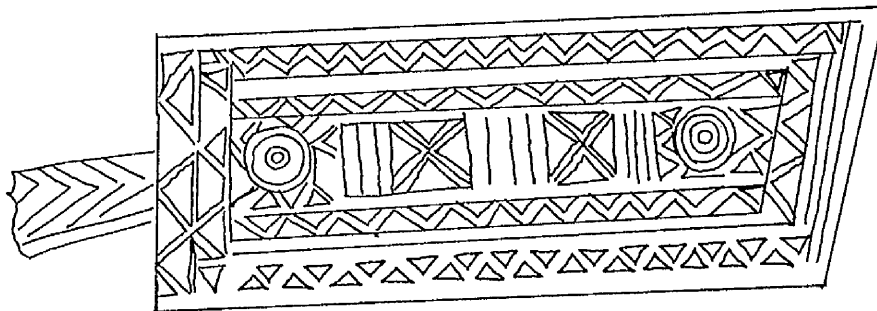


COMMON MOTIFS USED TO DECORATE MIJIKENDA OBJECTS : Also found in objects of other cultures, as above



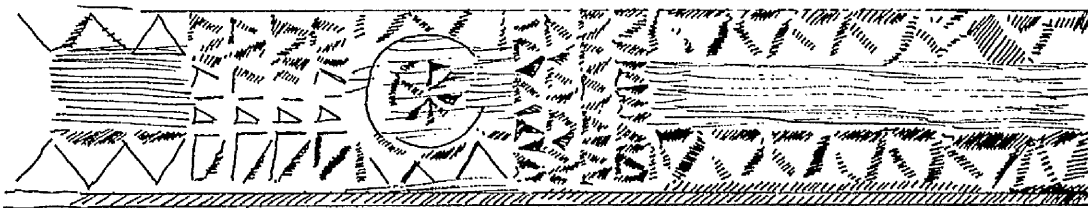
KAMBE  
(Sivoto: 1979: 107)

MIJIKENDA



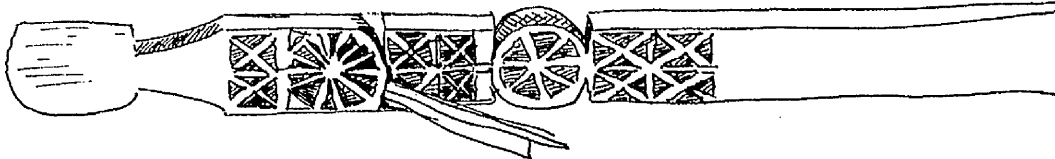
BAJUN MORTAR LID  
(Bravmann: 1983: 111)

BAJUN



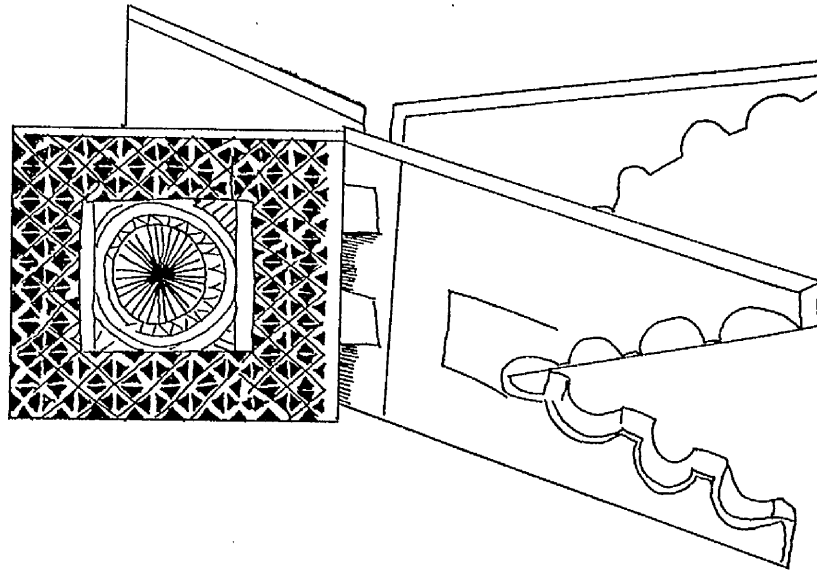
KAUMA  
(Bronx Community Art Gallery New York)

MIJIKENDA



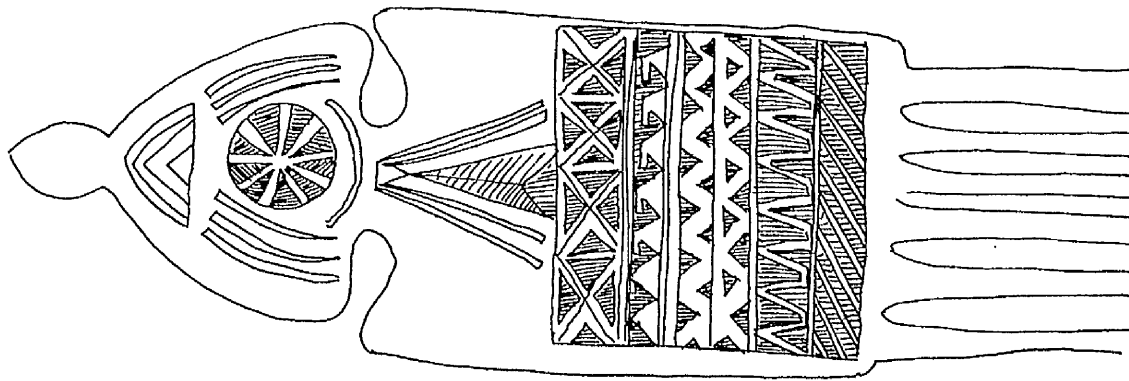
KAUMA  
(Adamson: 1967: 313)

SWAHILI

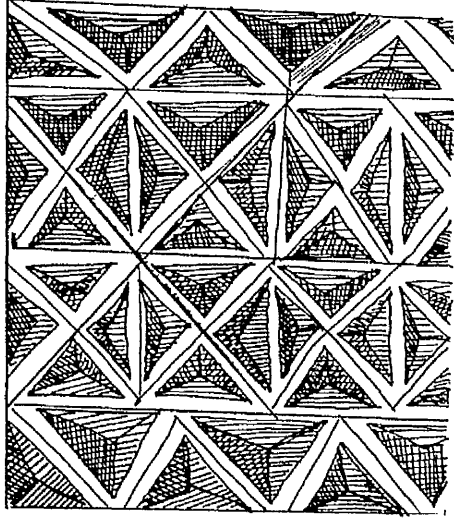
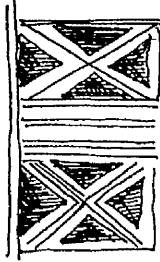


SWAHILI KORAN STAND (Bravmann: 1983: 111)

BONI



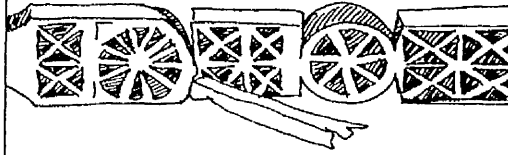
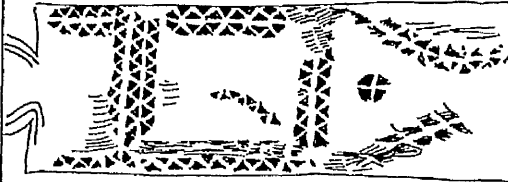
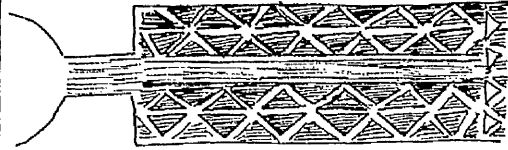
BONI COMB (UN 1971: 1019 d)



↑ SWAHILI (ALLEN: 1973: 3, 7) ↑

BONI (UN1971 (d): KNM)

BAJUNI (KNM: UC 1969: 1677 (a))

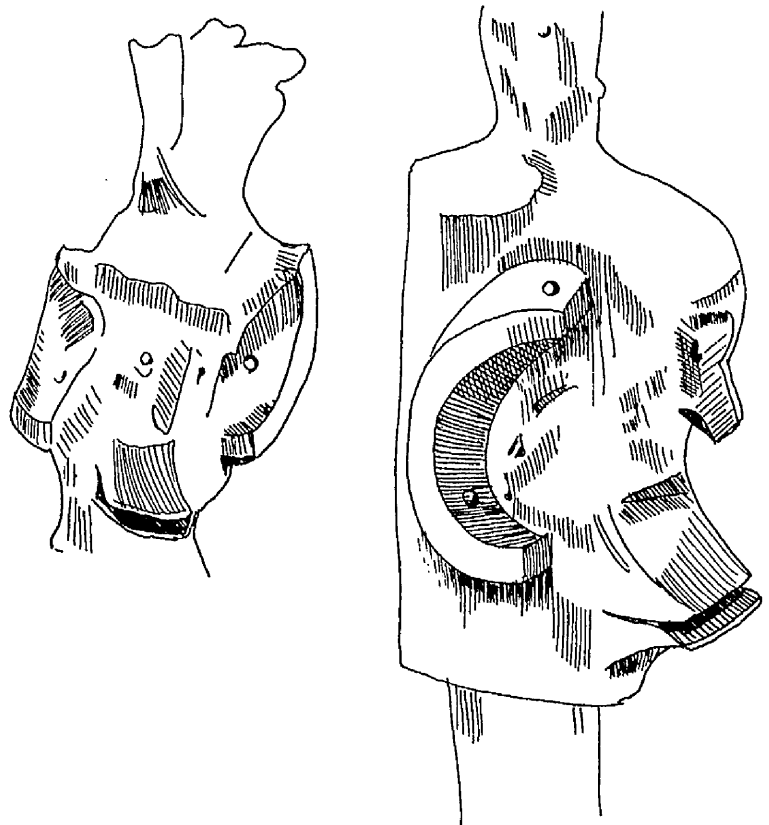


(WOLFE: 1979: 32)

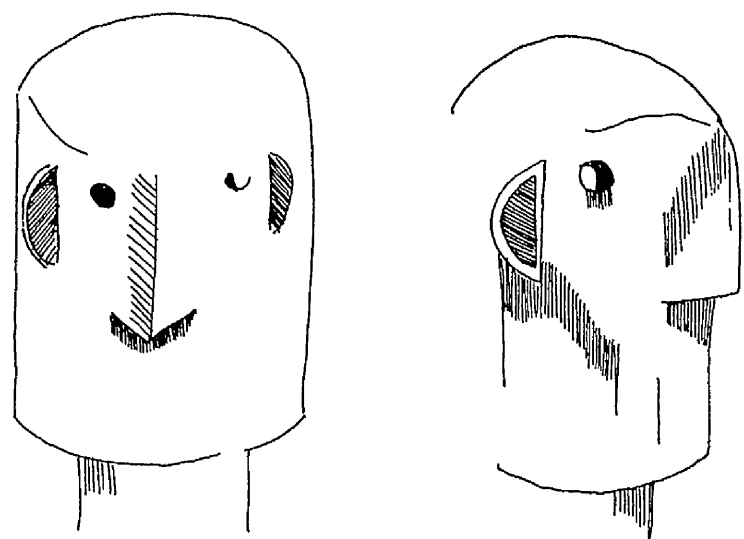
(ADAMSON: 1967: 297)

(ADAMSON: 1967: 216)

The artistic traditions of the Boni, Bajun, Swahili and Mijikenda share similarities in motifs. One motif commonly used is the cross ("Union-Jack") enclosed within a square or rectangle, or left unenclosed



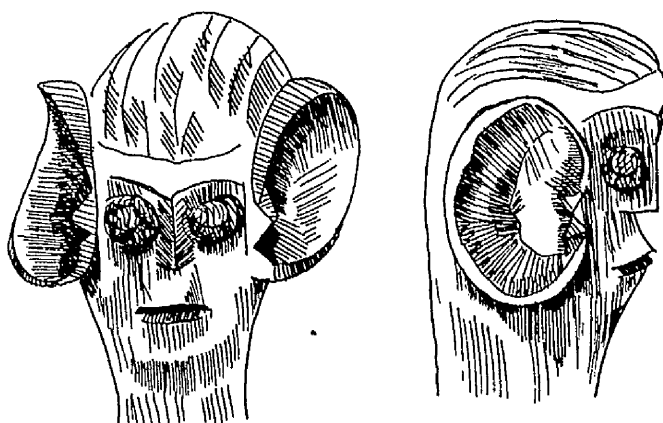
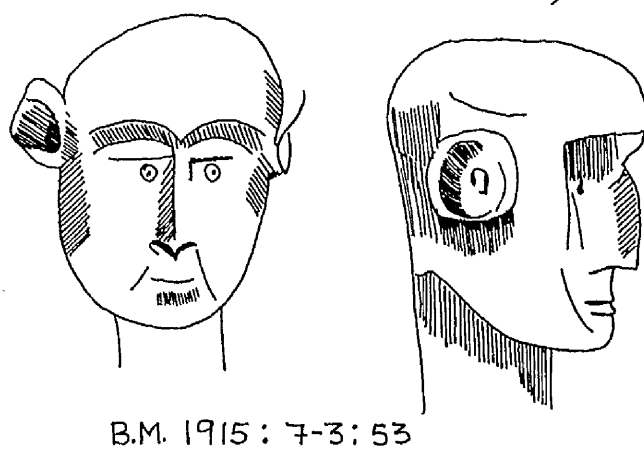
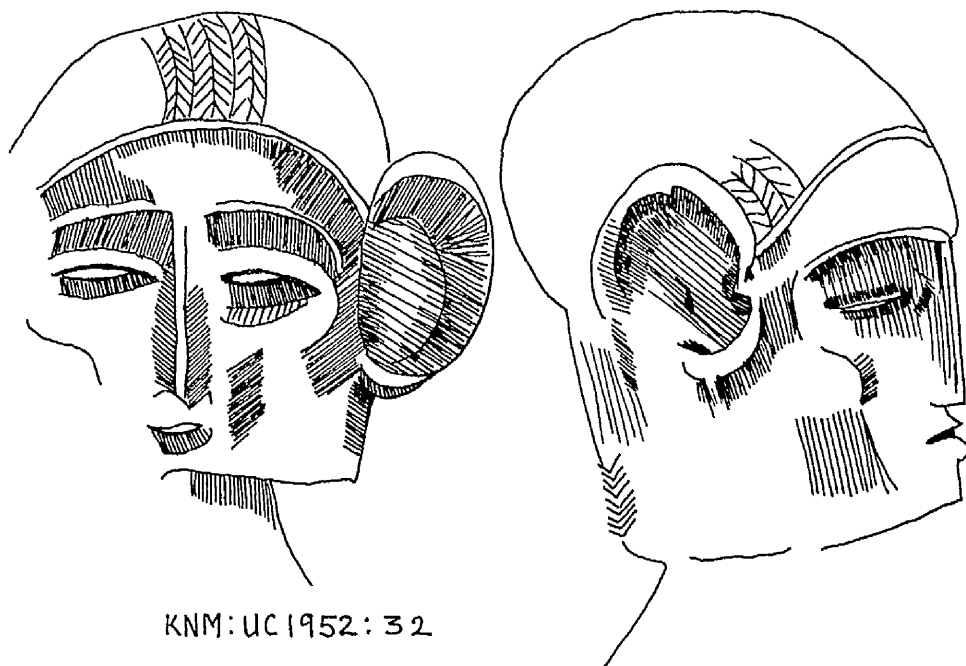
KNM: 1952:41



KNM: 1952:44E

STYLE: SCULPTURAL STOPPERS  
SCHEMATIC HEADS  
STYLE OF EARS

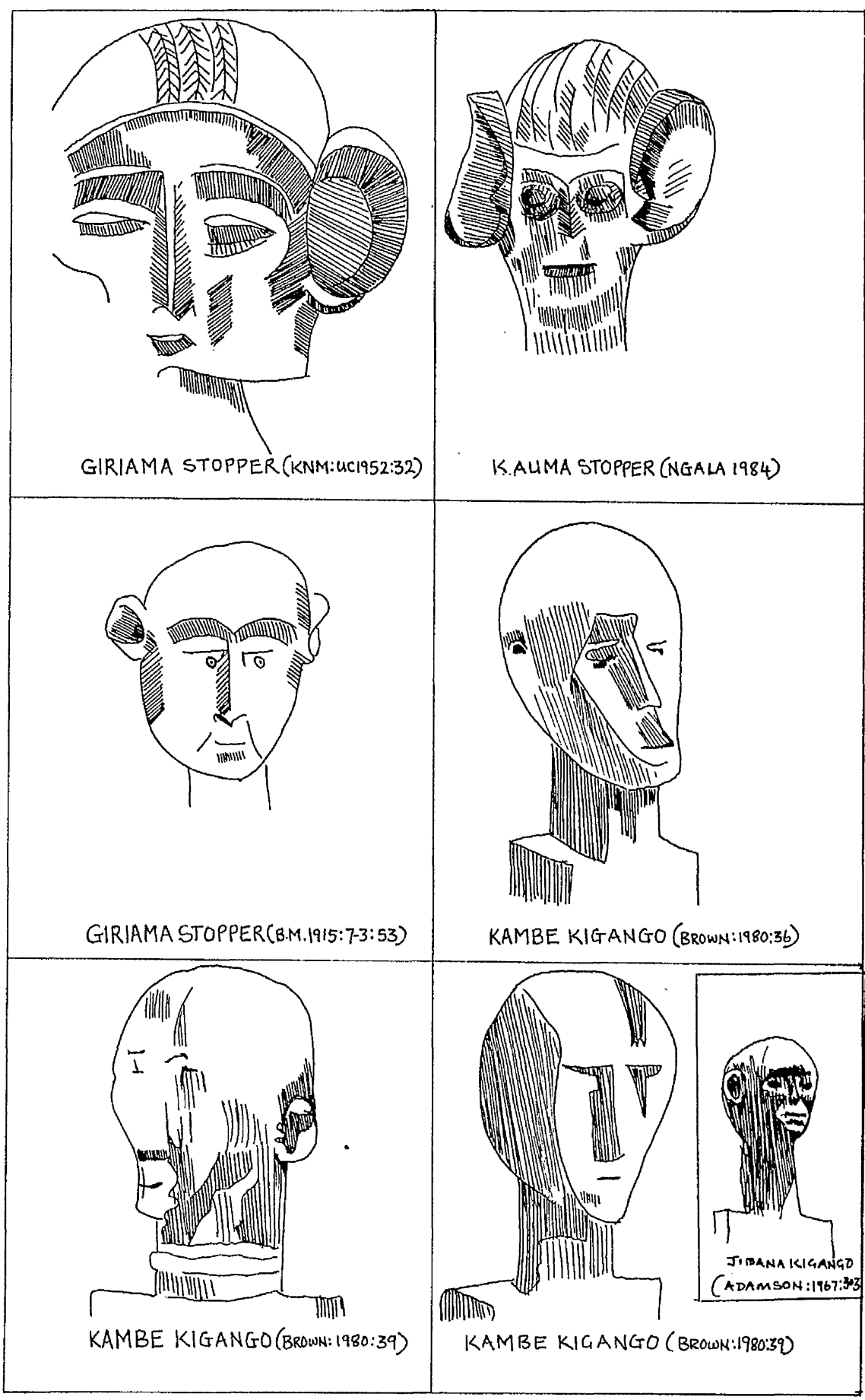
Fig. 55



STYLE OF EARS.  
STYLE : SCULPTURAL STOPPERS

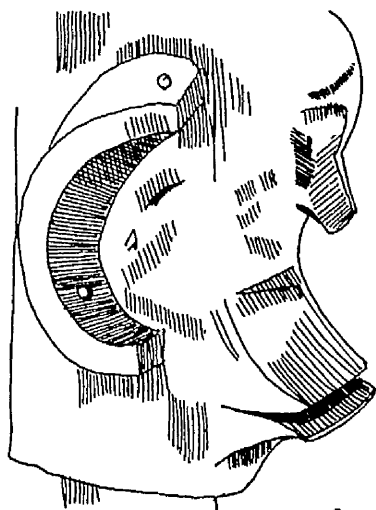
FIG.56



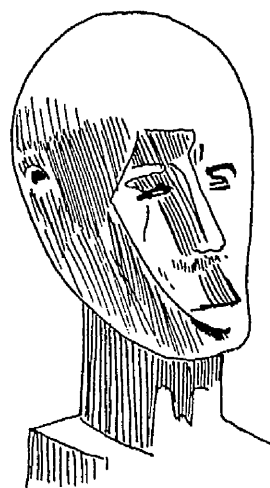


STYLISTIC COMPARISON BETWEEN STOPPERS + VIGANGO

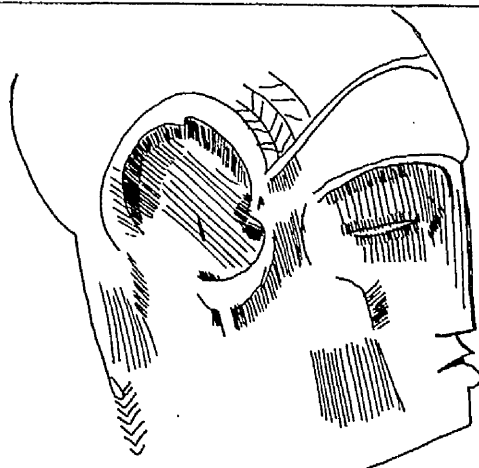
FIG. 57



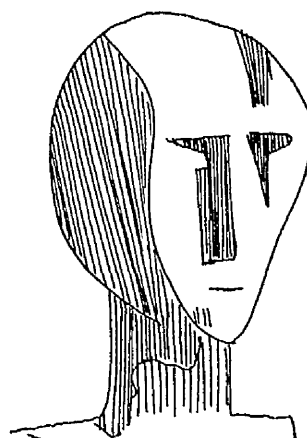
STOPPER: KNM: 1952:41 (GIRIAMA)



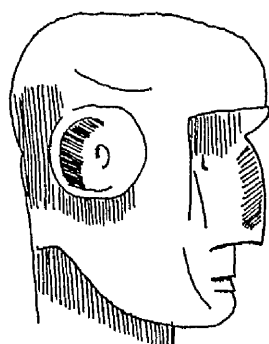
KAMBE KIGANGO (BROWN: 1980:39)



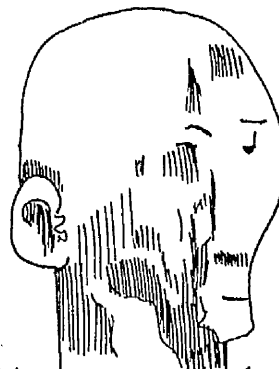
STOPPER: GIRIAMA KNM: UC 1952:32



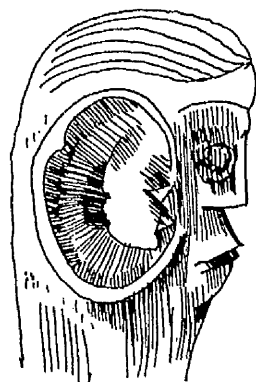
KAMBE KIGANGO (BROWN: 1980:39)



STOPPER: B.M. 1915: 7-3: 53 (GIRIAMA)



KAMBE KIGANGO (BROWN: 1980:39)

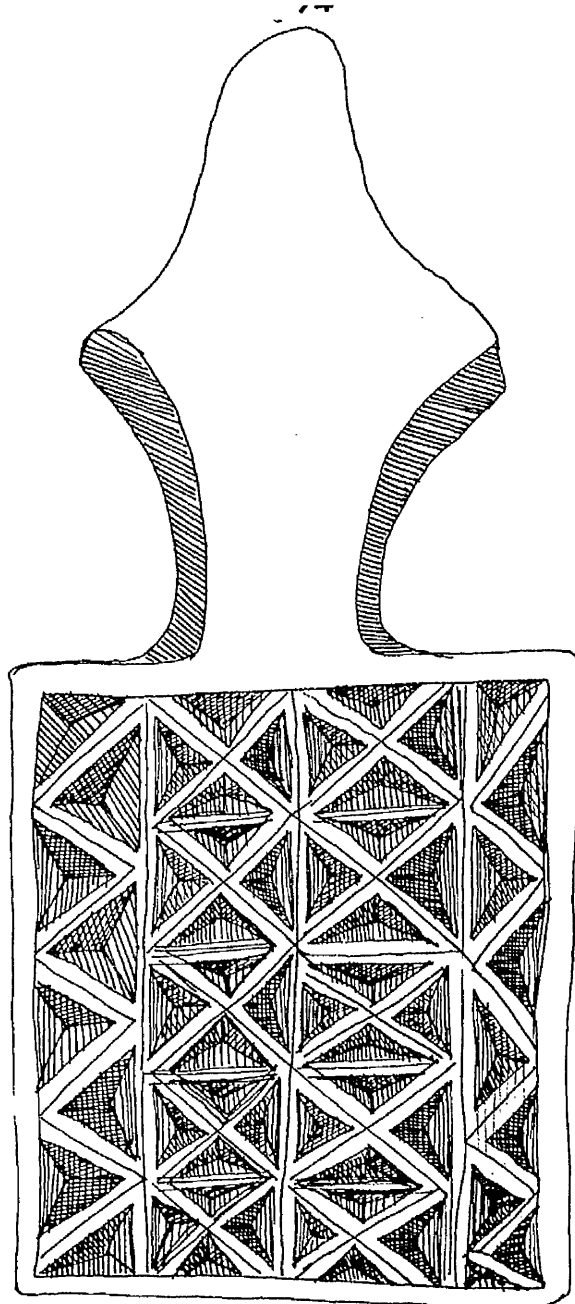


STOPPER: NYOKA NGALA, 1984 (KAUMA)



KIGANGO (Group? Claerhout)

STYLISTIC COMPARISON BETWEEN STOPPERS + VIGANGO



Width: 3"

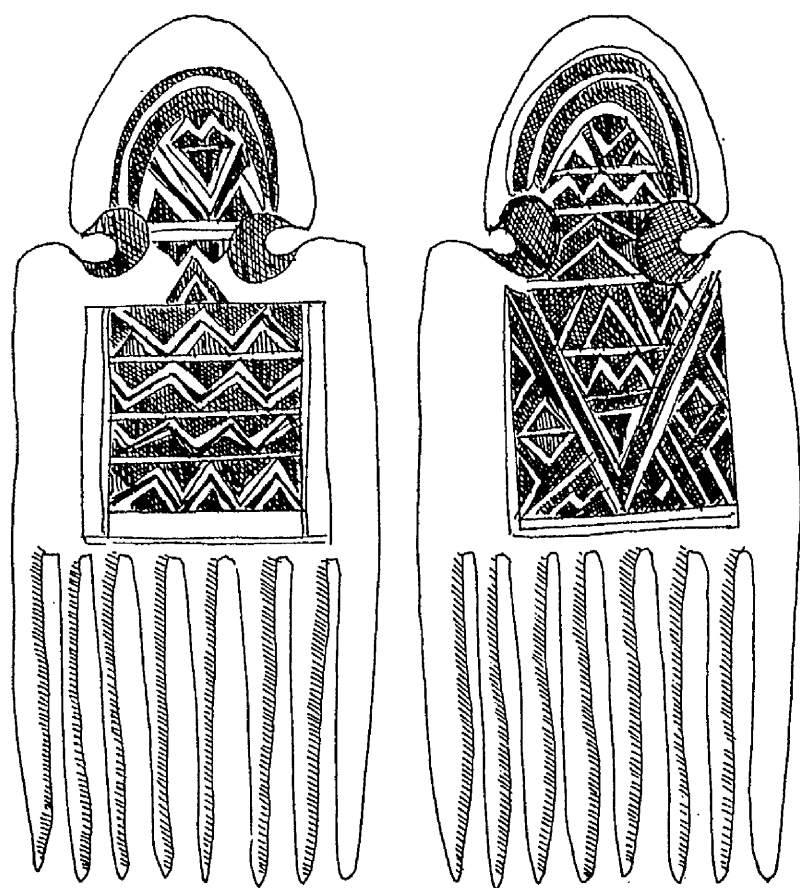
Total  
Length: 7"

BAJUN: CARVED WOODEN PADDLE USED TO PUT DESIGNS  
ON BREAD (CHAPA ZANAMU): UC 1969:1677(a)  
NAIROBI MUSEUM

THE SAME MOTIF APPEARS ON MIJIKENDA VIGANGO

BAJUN

FIG. 59



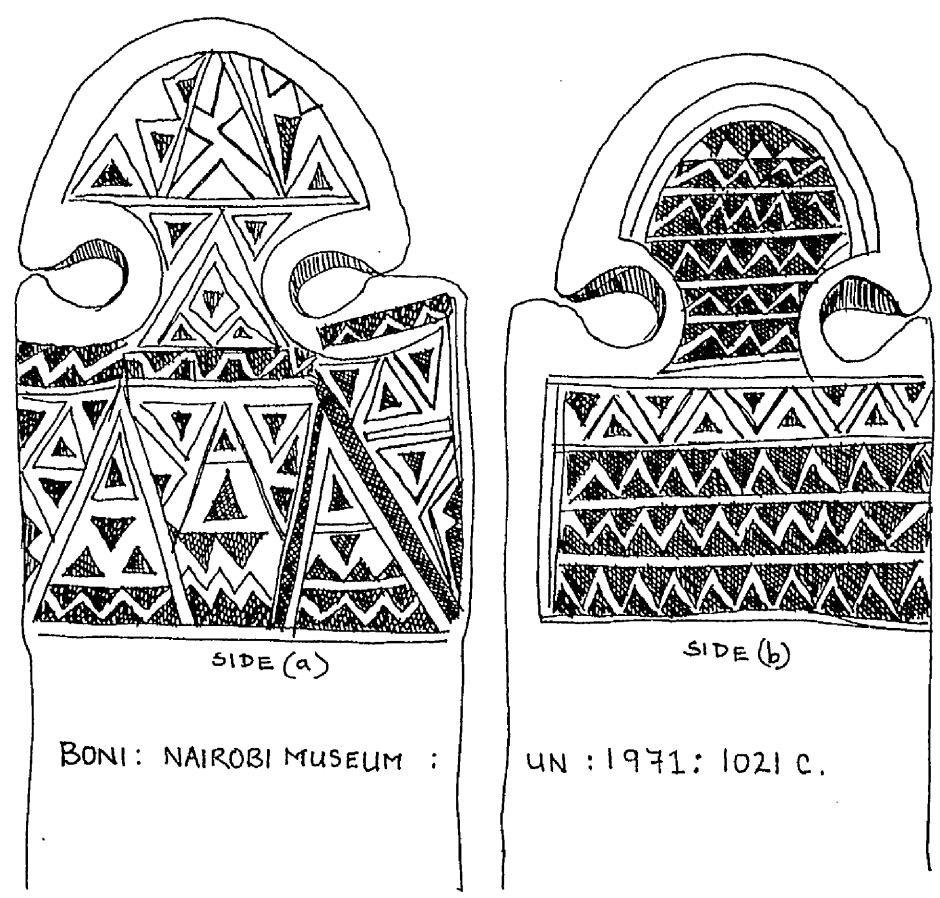
width: 2 1/2"

Total  
length: 5"

SIDE (a)

SIDE (b)

BONI : NAIROBI MUSEUM : UN1971 : 1021b



width: 3"

Length: 7"

SIDE (a)

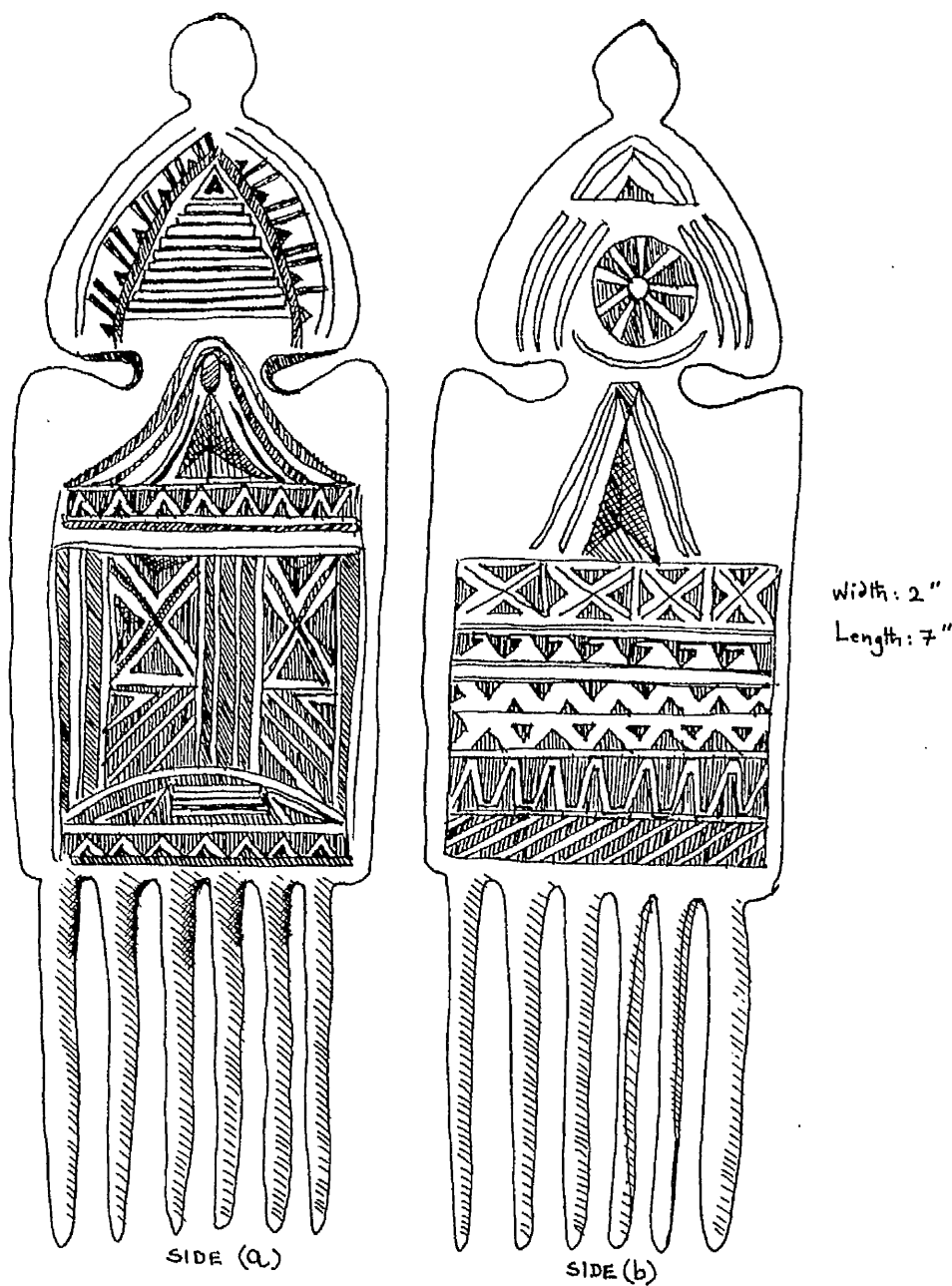
SIDE (b)

BONI : NAIROBI MUSEUM :

UN : 1971 : 1021 c.

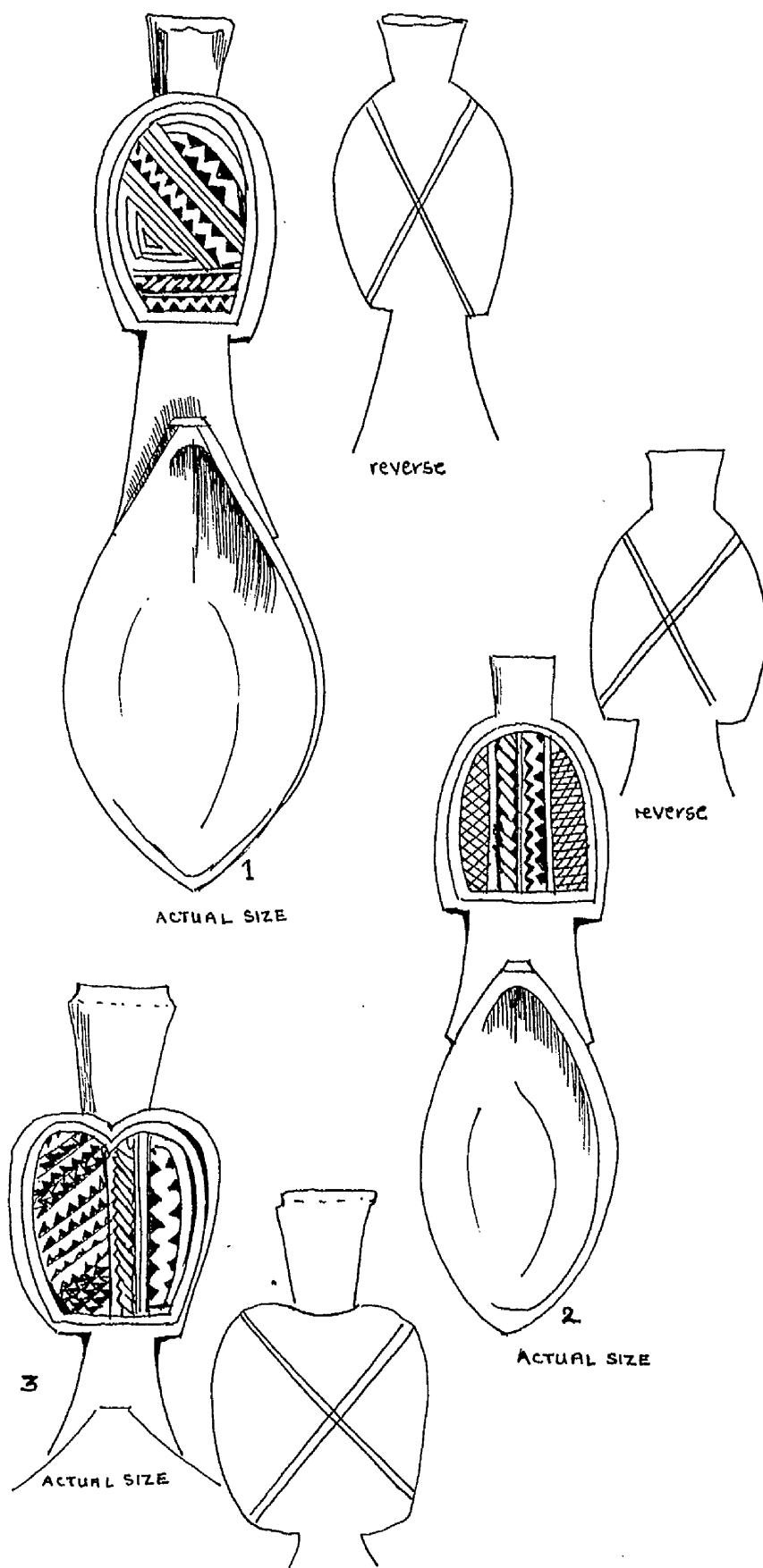
BONI

FIG. 60



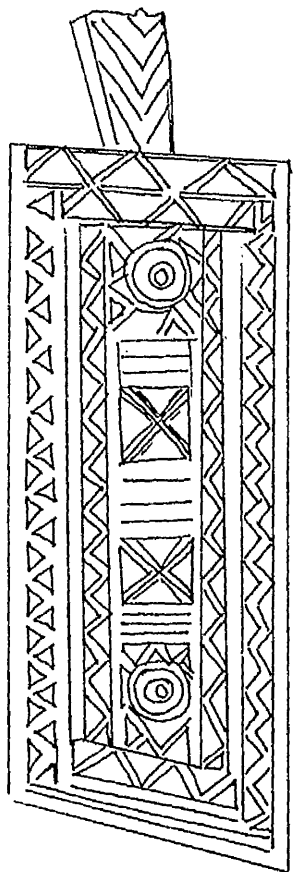
BONI COMB.: USED BY SWAHILI AND BAJUN  
NAIROBI MUSEUM : UN 1971 : 1019 (d)

FIG. 61



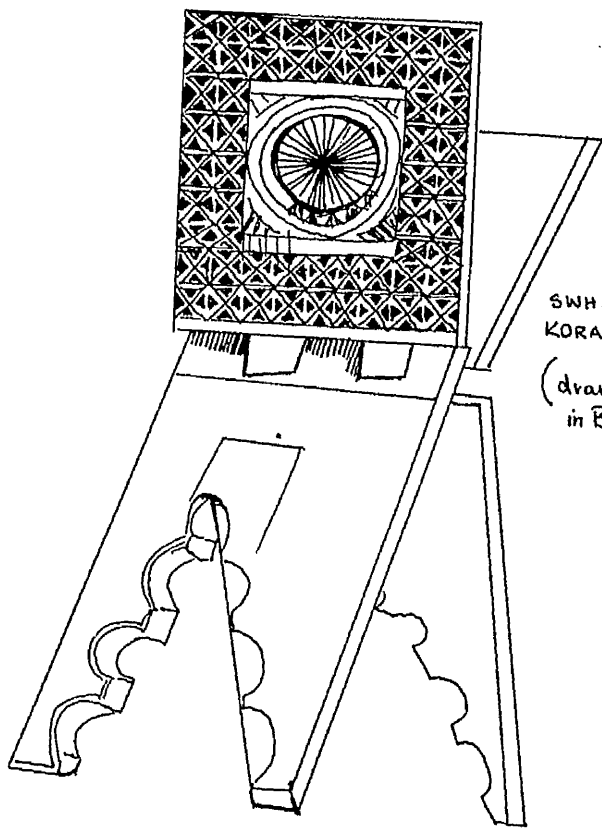
BONI SCULPTED WOODEN SPOONS (BOUGHT FROM SHOP, NAIROBI 1985)

FIG. 62



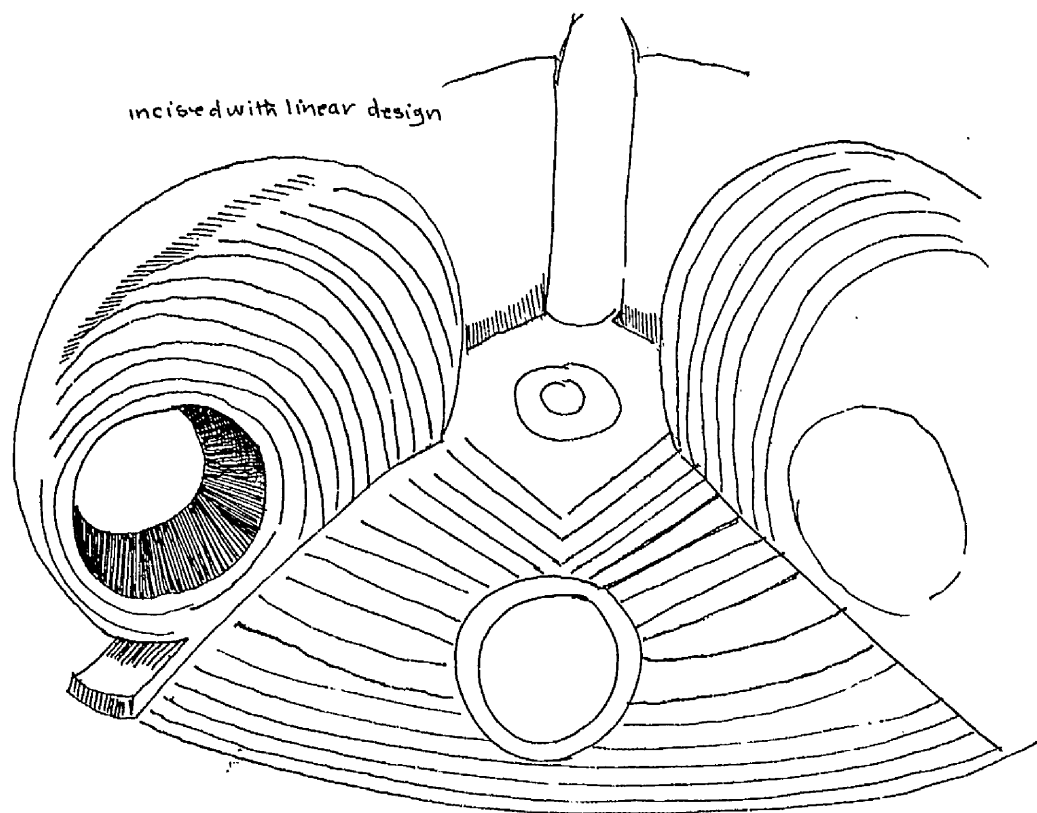
BAJUN : SLIDING LID  
FOR MORTAR.  
(drawn from photograph in  
BRAYMANN: 1983: III)

EXAMPLES OF SWAHILI OBJECTS



SWHALI : LAMU  
KORAN STAND (MARUFAD)  
(drawn from photograph  
in Braymann: 1983: III)

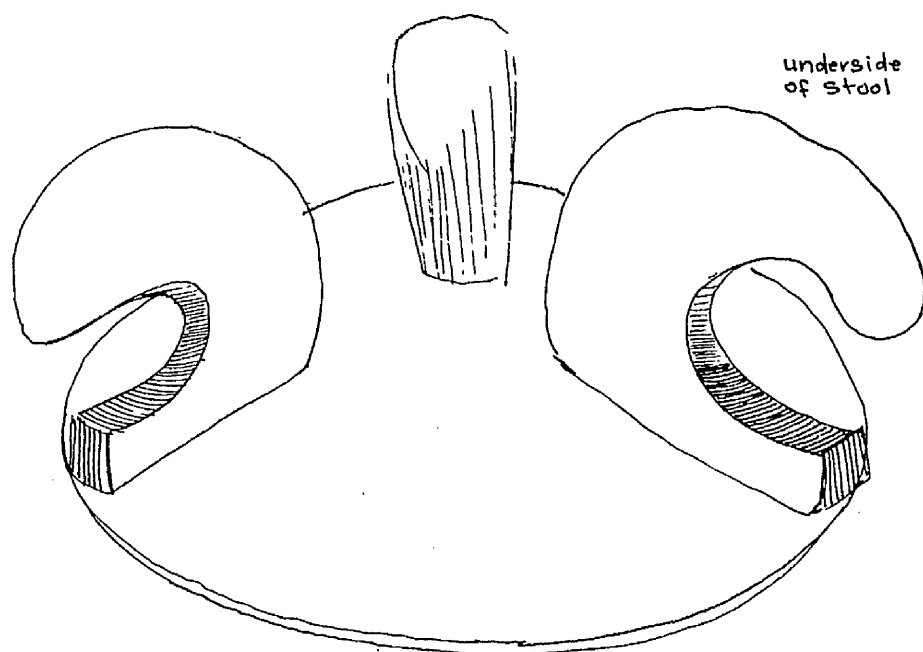
FIG. 63



3-LEGGED KAMBA STOOL : INCISED UNDERSIDE

B.M. 1971 . Af. 13.5

Diameter: 9 inches

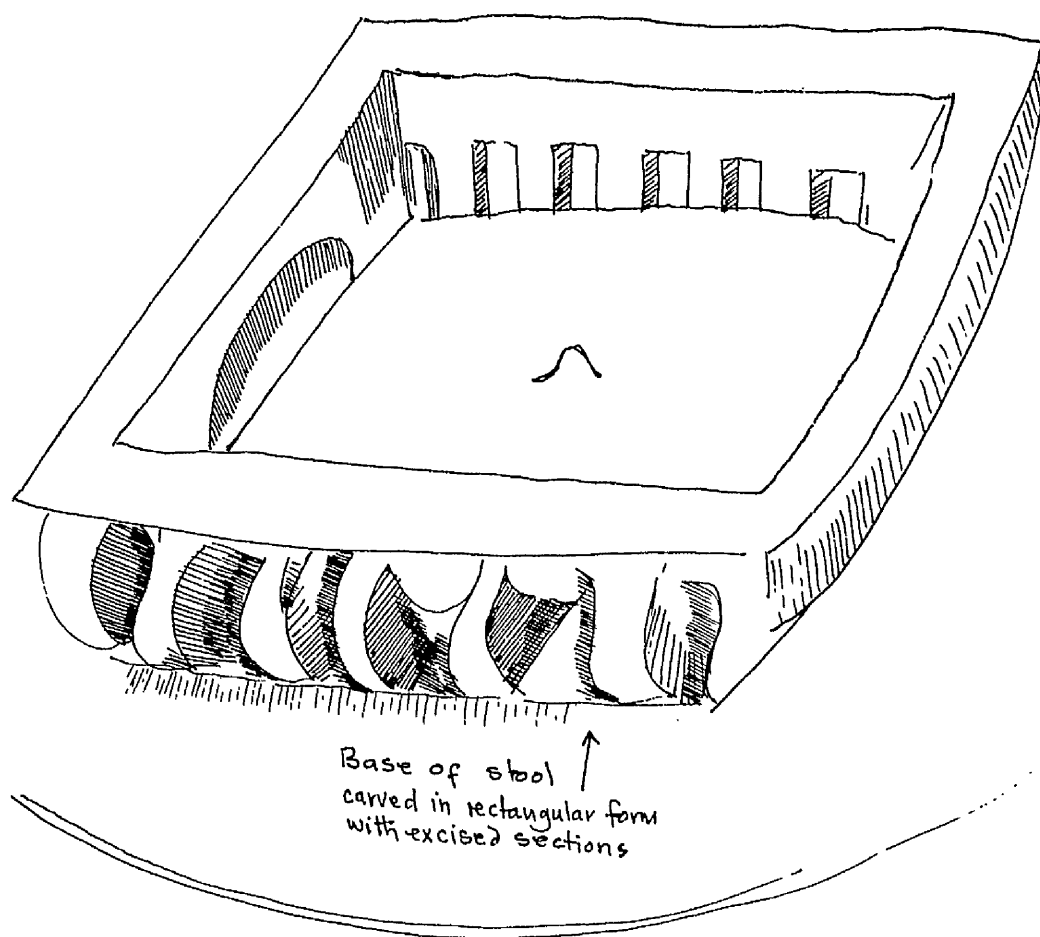


3-LEGGED KAMBA STOOL

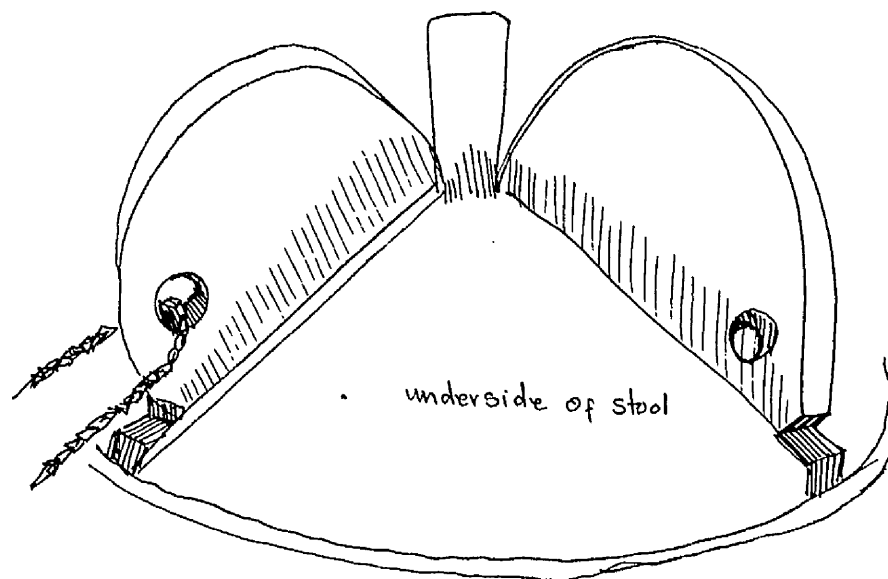
B.M. 1940 . Af 11-19

Diameter 7 3/4 inches

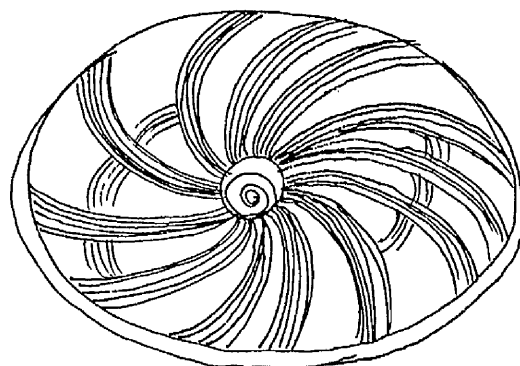




BASE OF KAMBA STOOL B.M. 1947. Af 16.242 : Diameter  $8\frac{1}{2}$  ins

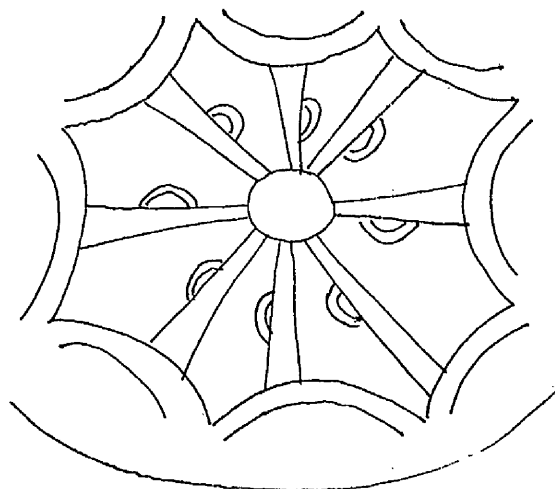


3-LEGGED KAMBA STOOL : B.M. 1947. 16.3 Diameter:  $9\frac{3}{4}$  ins



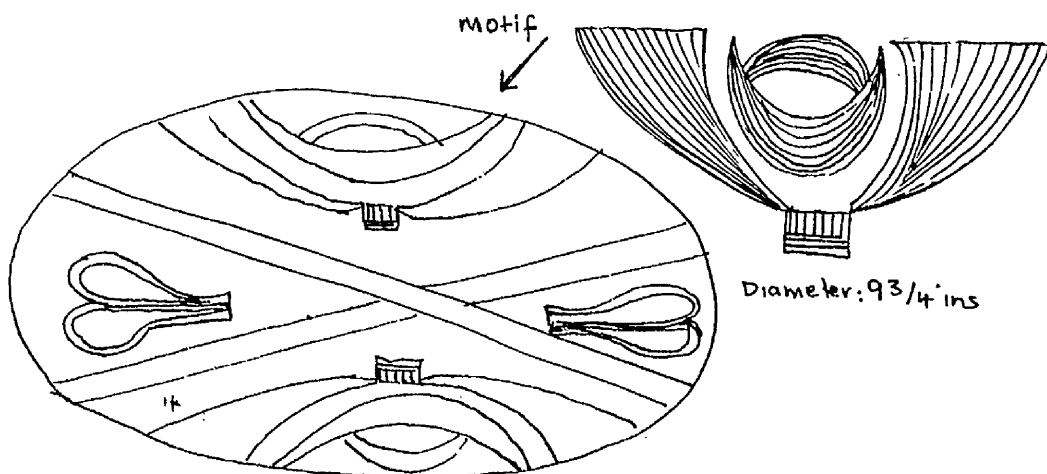
Diameter:  $9\frac{1}{2}$  ins

B.M. 1947. Af 16-6 KAMBA STOOL - SURFACE DECORATED WITH INLAID WIRE



Diameter:  $9\frac{1}{2}$  ins

B.M. 1947. Af 16-5 KAMBA STOOL - SURFACE DECORATED WITH WIRE



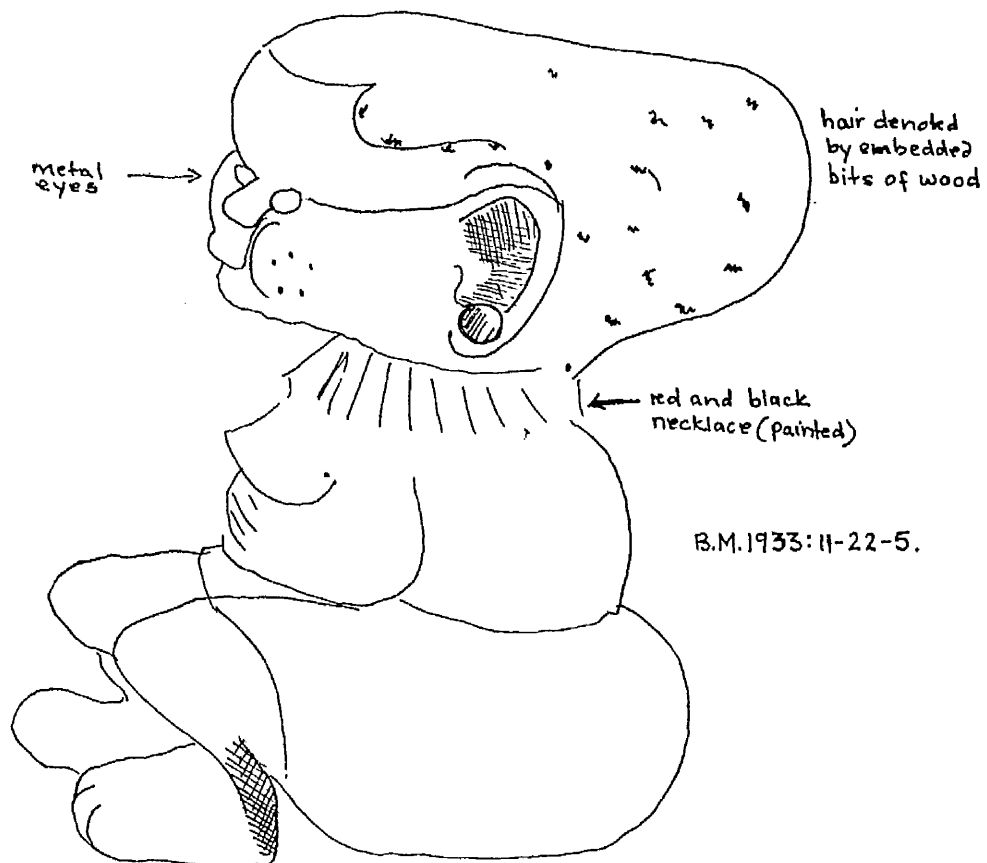
Diameter:  $9\frac{3}{4}$  ins

B.M. 1947. Af 16-3 KAMBA STOOL - SURFACE DECORATED WITH WIRE

# KAMBA CARVINGS



B.M. 1933: 11-22-9



B.M. 1933: 11-22-5.



Plate: 1 Typical Mijikenda Vegetation: Maize and Coconut Trees



Plate:2 Traditional house. Gedi Ruins, 1984



Plate:3 Traditional and rectangular houses. Junju, 1984



Plate:4 Duruma homes. Kaloleni, 1982





Plate:5 Mulai wa Kabao's home. Shariani, 1984



Plate:6 White washed house. Ribe, 1982



Plate:7 Plaited palm leaf screen. Kaloleni, 1982



Plate:8 Detail of plaited screen





Plate:9 Granary under construction. Thatched with palm leaves.  
Timboni, 1984



Plate:10 Mortar, pottery vessel, wooden bowl. Shariani, 1984





Plate:11 3-legged stools. Decorated one is man's, plain is woman's.  
1985



Plate:12 Detail of pattern on man's 3-legged stool. Shariani, 1985



Plate:13 Spoons, ladles, waterpot. Kikambala, 1985



Plate:14 Mweri Ngwaru plaiting palm leaf strip for basket.  
Kikambala, 1984





Plate:15 Plaited palm leaf strip being sewn to make a mat.  
Shariani, 1984

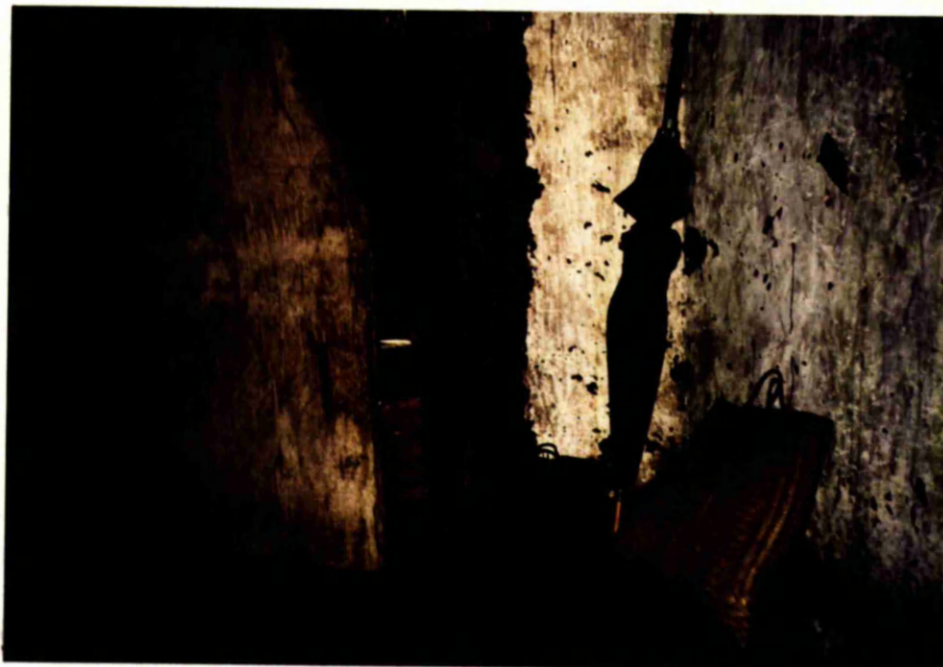


Plate:16 Muganga's basket. Timboni, 1984



Plate:17 Grass twined basket. B.M. 1953: Af:50. Height:15ins



Plate:18 Earthenware waterpot. Aluminium cover and plastic mug.  
Kikambala, 1984





Plate:19 Cement water-storage pot with pipe and tap. Shariani, 1985



Plate:20 Woodworking tools. Mida, 1985



Plate:21 Woodworking tool. Mida, 1985



Plate:22 Lwalwa: grindingstone. Shariani, 1985





Plate:23 Lwalwa: rotary quern, made from sandstone. Shariani, 1985



Plate:24 Lwalwa. 1985



Plate:25 Lwalwa, upper and lower stones. 1985



Plate:26 Lwalwa, upper and lower stones. 1985





Plate:27 Double-edged iron sword. B.M. 1915: 7-3: 46. Length:25.5ins.  
Scabbard. B.M. 1915: 7-3: 47. Length:22ins

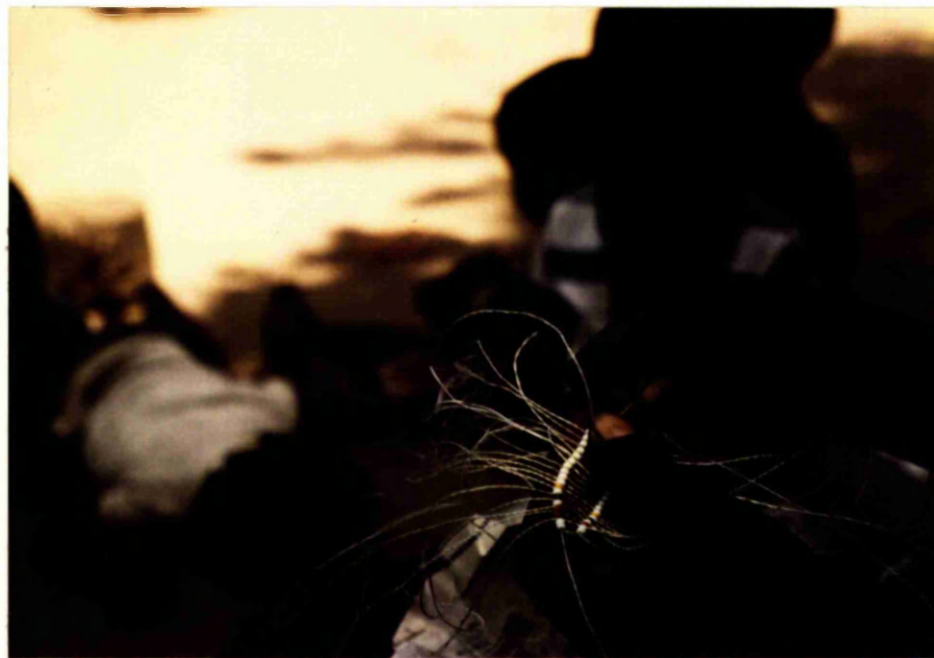


Plate:28 Kache Mweri making vorodede, beaded bracelet, Kikambala,  
1985

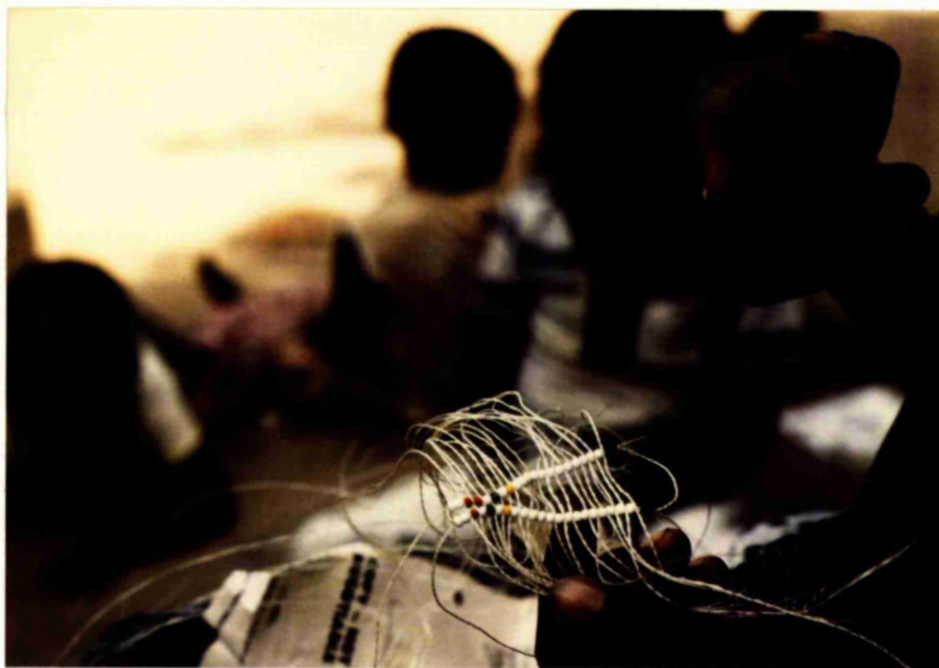


Plate:29 Two rows of beads with warp threads entered



Plate:30 Rows of beads pushed together



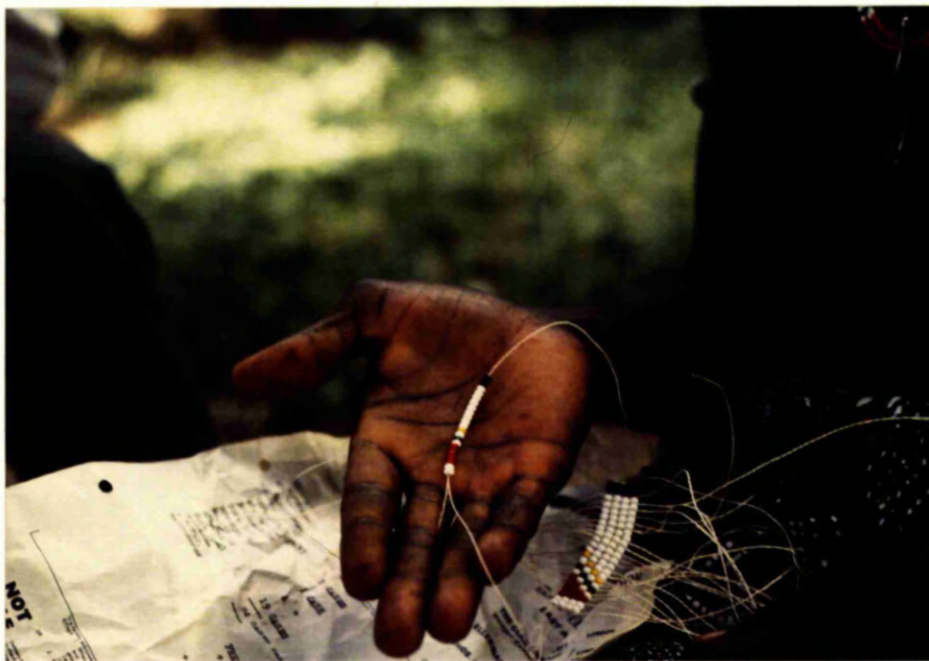


Plate:31 Four completed rows and next row of beads ready to receive warp threads



Plate:32 Vorodede: (a) KNM: UC 1969: 327E: 7½ins x 1 ins  
(b) KNM: UC 1969: 327a: 8¼ins x 2ins



Plate:33 Vorodede: (a) KNM: UC 1969: 62: 8 ins x 2 ins  
(b) KNM: UC 1969: 64: 8 ins x 2 ins



Plate:34 Vorodede: (a) KNM: UC 1969: 65a:  $7\frac{3}{4}$ ins x  $1\frac{3}{4}$ ins  
(b) KNM: UC 1969: 64b: 8 ins x 2 ins  
(c) KNM: UC 1970: 32c:  $8\frac{1}{4}$ ins x 2ins





Plate:35 Vorodede: (a) KNM: UC 1968: 355: 9ins x 1¼ins  
 (b) KNM: UC 1968: 353A: 7½ins x 1¼ins  
 (c) KNM: UC 1968: 360A: 4½ins x 1ins  
 (d) KNM: UC 1968: 358: 5ins x 1ins  
 (e) KNM: UC 1968: 359B: 5¼ins x 1ins



Plate:36 Kisara-sara, bead necklace worn by old women for dancing at ceremonial occasions. Also used for burial: KNM: UC 1969: 66A: 8½ins x 2ins



Plate:37 Kipote-pote, openwork bead necklace worn by young women as ornament and on ceremonial occasions. Fringed with 104 coins. KNM: UC 1968



Plate:38 Kivele (top) KNM: UC 1968: 403 Coiled wire and cowrie shells sewn on leather. Used as protection against evil medicine  
 (b) Ndore, KNM: UC 1969: 83: heavy brass beads threaded into bride's hair  
 (c) Kirangi, KNM: UC 1968: 391: 14ins x 1½ins. Fine brass chain looped through sisal thread. Worn by women as ornament



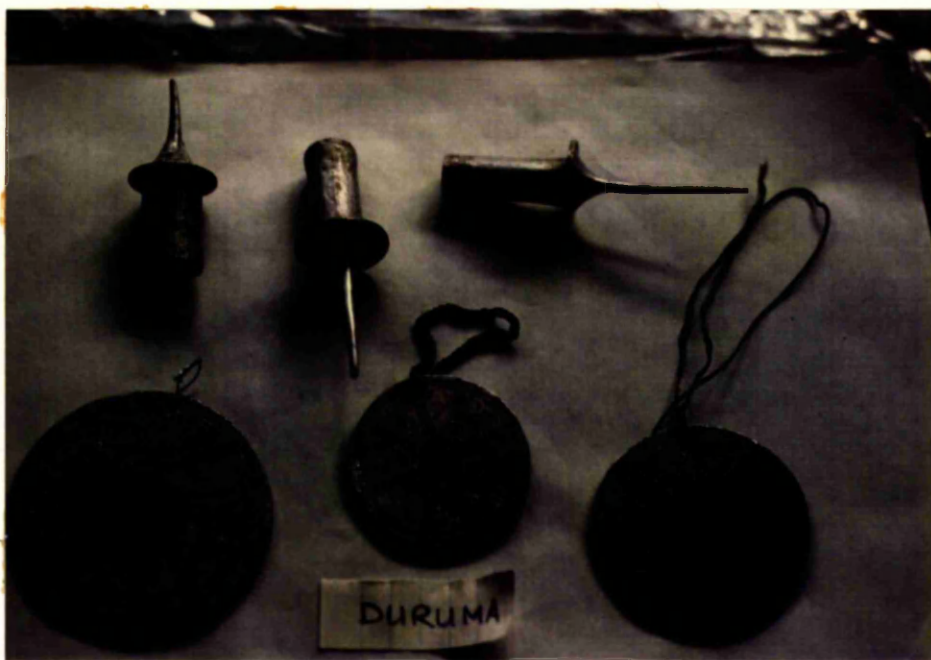


Plate:39 Vifufu (Duruma) earplugs, KNM: UC 1968: 385b: 2ins long  
 (b)KNM: UC 1968: 385 : 3ins long  
 (c)KNM: UC 1968: 385d: 2½ins long

Mweri, aluminium discs: (d)KNM: UC 1968: 423: Diameter: 2¾ins  
 (e)KNM: UC 1968: 387: Diameter: 2ins  
 (f)KNM: UC 1968: 423B: Diameter: 2½ins



Plate:40 Vifufu (Giriama) (a)KNM: UC 1969: 57A: 2ins long, diam:1½ins  
 (b)KNM: UC 1969: 57B: 1ins long, diam:1½ins  
 (c)KNM: UC 1969: 58 : 1¾ins long, diam:1½ins  
 (d)KNM: UC 1969: 58B: 1¾ins long, diam:1½ins

Mikufu, chain necklaces with aluminium clasps

(e)KNM: UC 1969: 71  
 (f)KNM: UC 1969: 53

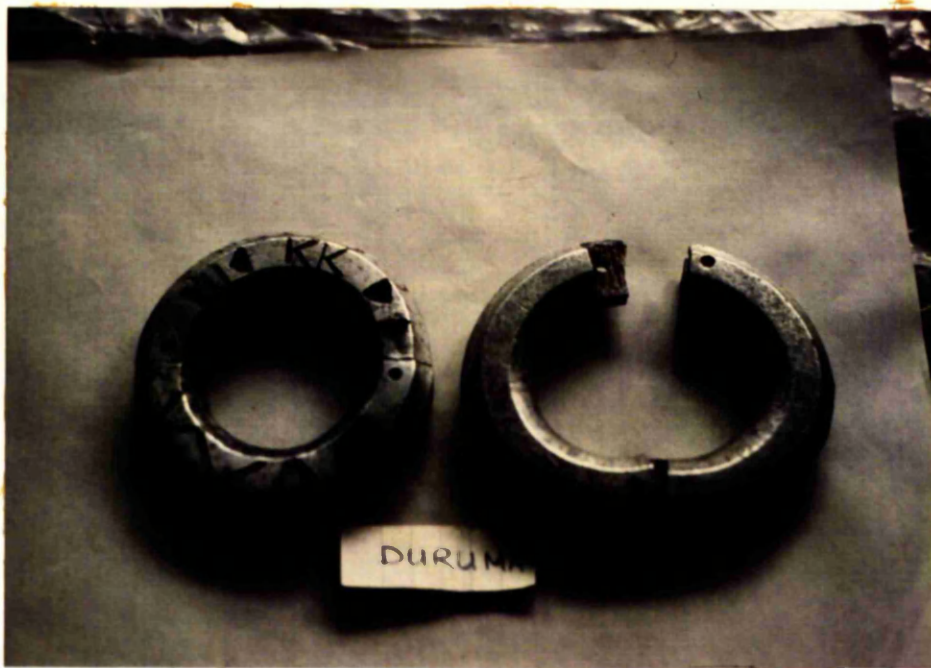


Plate:41 Kidanga, aluminium octagonal bracelet worn by women as ornament  
(g)KNM: UC 1968: 413: diameter: 3ins

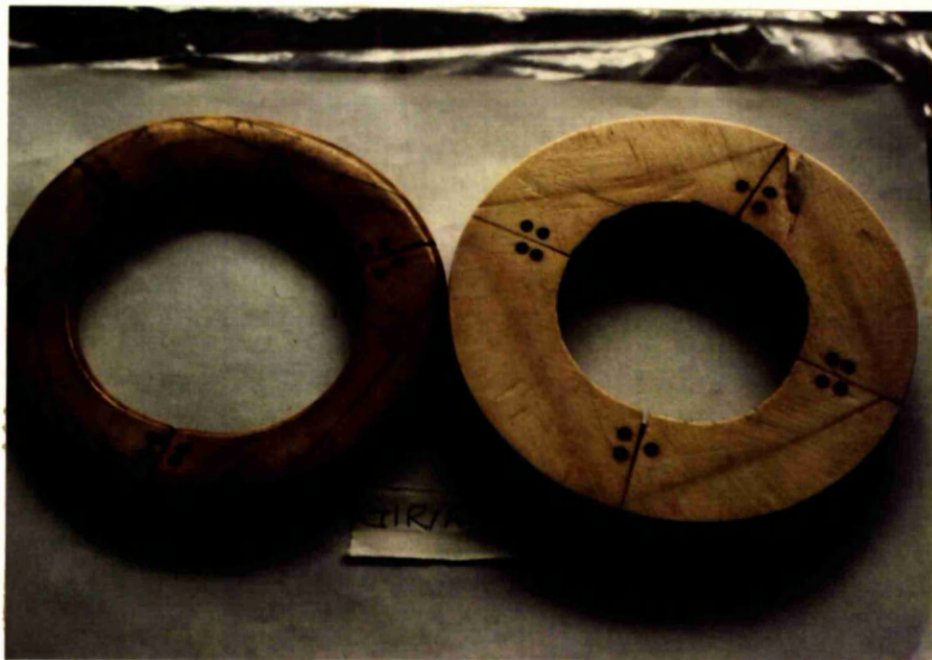


Plate:42 Ivory bracelet in sections, fastened with ebony pins  
(a) KNM: UC 1943: 15: diameter: 4ins  
(b) KNM: UC 1943: 14: diameter: 5¼ins





Plate:43 Ivory bracelets. KNM: UC 1943: 15 and KNM: UC 1943: 14



Plate:44 Strips of lesa cloth looped over string to make bandika skirt, 1985

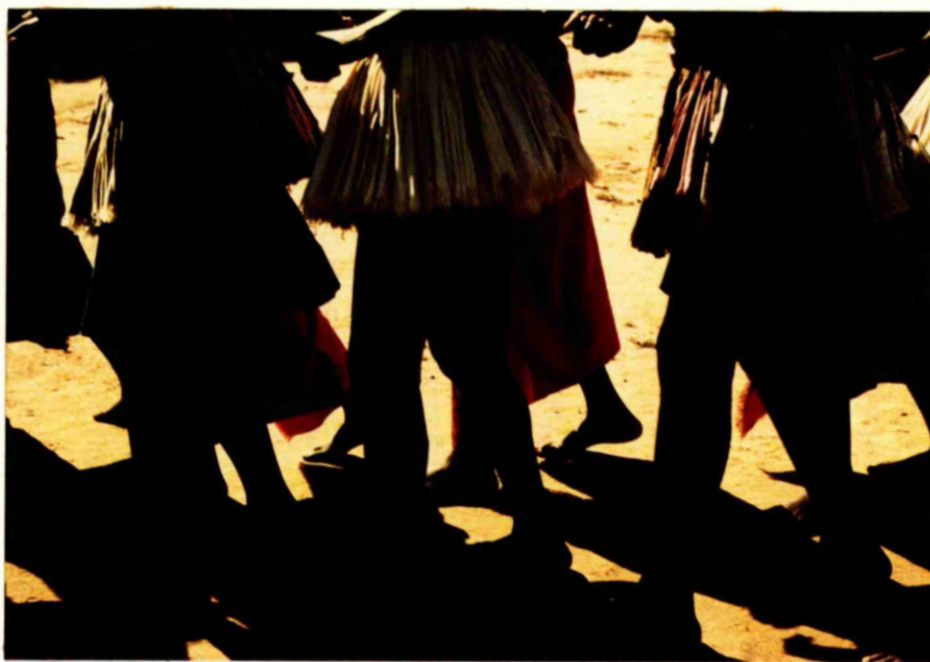


Plate:45 Bandika (coloured) and hando (white) skirts.  
Shariani, 1984



Plate:46 Boy in shuka (waistcloth) and girl in hando and leso  
(printed). Shariani, 1984





Plate:47 Leso cloth criss-crossed and tied at neck. Shariani, 1984



Plate:48 Duruma woman in leso and beaded ornaments, and twisted hairstyle. 1982



Plate:49 Bumbumbu drums (single-membrane), 3 legs. Gedi Ruins, 1984



Plate:50 Chapuo (double-membrane) and bumbumbu used for ngoma za pepo, Timboni, 1984





Plate:51 Bumbumbu played on platform. Remembrance feast.  
Duruma, 1982



Plate:52 Mshondo (single-membrane). Remembrance feast.  
Duruma, 1982



Plate:53 Upatu (gong) accompanying drums. Remembrance feast.  
Duruma, 1982



Plate:54 Rimba (xylophone). Shariani, 1984





Plate:55 Ndonga (tin rattle). Shariani, 1984



Plate:56 Kayamba (reed rattle). Shariani, 1984



Plate:57 Borassus palm nut rattles worn by dancers. Remembrance feast. Shariani, 1982



Plate:58 People arriving at a remembrance feast. Duruma, 1982





Plate:59 Women participating in dancing. Remembrance feast.  
Duruma, 1982



Plate:60 Women dancing, with babies on their backs. Notice  
saying on the leso: Tamu ya harusi ni furaha: 'The  
sweetness of a wedding is happiness'



Plate:61 Male dancers lining up to perform at a remembrance feast. Duruma, 1982



Plate:62 Male dancers in women's skirts, N.B. Borassus palm nut rattles and palm leaf skirt, 1982





Plate:63 Dancer in leso, Duruma, 1982



Plate:64 Dancer in woman's skirt, and feathers in hair, 1982



Plate:65 Young dance group, N.B. 'modern' costumes, 1982

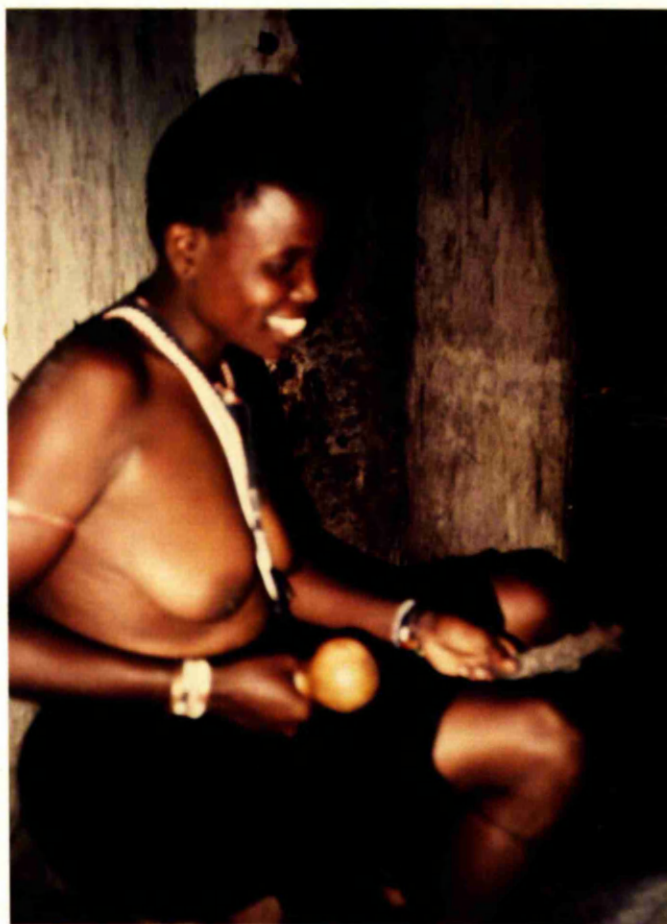


Plate:66 Katso Kanyoi, muganga, Timboni, 1984





Plate:67 Patient and child, at Katso's house, therapy session, Timboni, 1984



Plate:68 Katso communicating with spirits, Timboni, 1984



Plate:69 Katso sniffing herbal medicine, Timboni, 1984



Plate:70 Katso drawing on sand placed on winnowing tray turned upside down for divination, Timboni, 1984

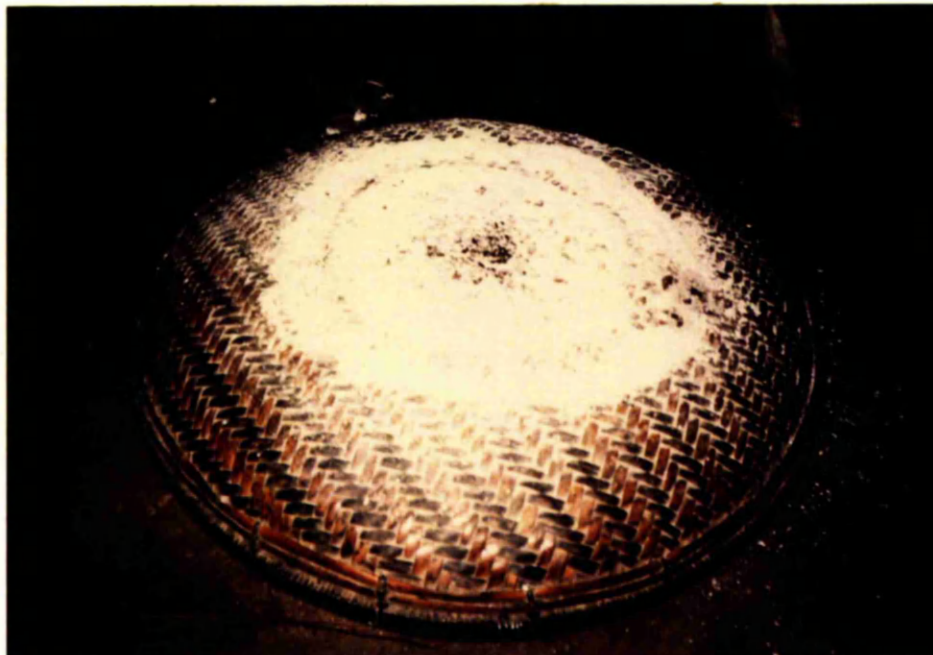


Plate:71 Tray with sand and divination patterns, Timboni, 1984

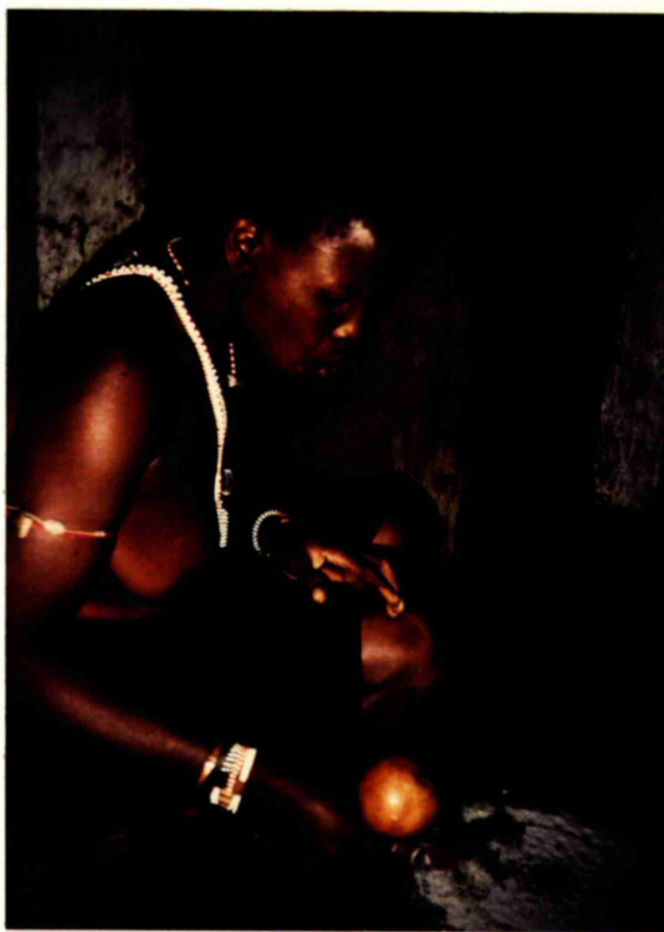


Plate:72 Katso with calabash rattle, divining, Timboni, 1984



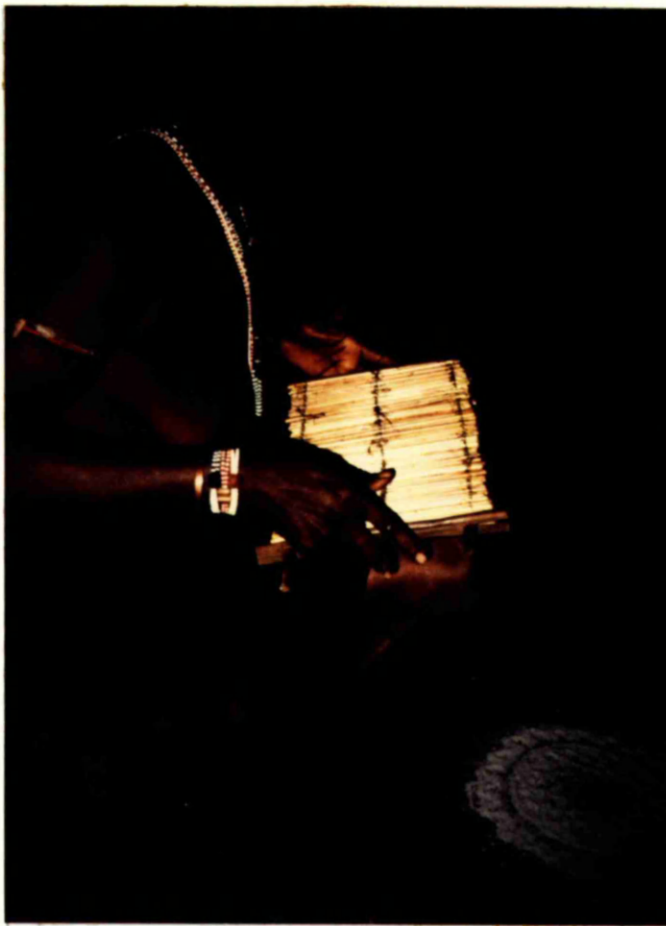


Plate:73 Katso with reed rattle, divining, Timboni, 1984



Plate:74 Katso after an exhausting therapy session, Timboni, 1984





Plate:75 Drummers tensioning drums for a ngoma za pepo ceremony, Timboni, 1984

Plate:76 Chapuo and bumbumbu drums for ngoma za pepo, Timboni, 1984



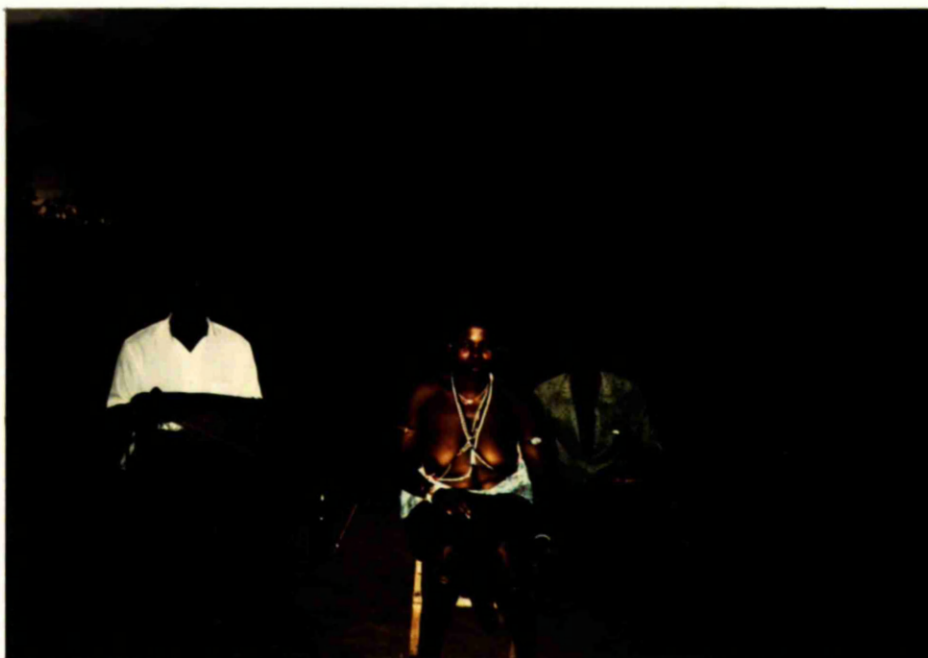


Plate:77 Katso and drummers ready for ngoma za pepo ceremony, Timboni, 1984



Plate:78 Katso leading possessed person to compound, Timboni, 1984



Plate:79 Possessed person completely covered in white cloth,  
Timboni, 1984



Plate:80 Mwamau Hamisi making jangamizi: A janus clay figure used  
in spirit possession. Height: 3ft.





Plate:81 Jangamizi: sculpture, Shariani, 1985. Height: Approx: 3ft.



Plate:82 Jangamizi, sculpture, Shariani, 1985



Plate:83 Jangamizi, sideview, Shariani, 1985



Plate:84 Mwamau Hamisi decorating jangamizi with spots of red ochre. 1985



Plate:87 Jangamizi, female view, 1985



Plate:88 Jangamizi, male view, 1985





Plate:89 Charo Dida with memorial sticks of his ancestors under shelter. Timboni, 1984



Plate:90 Memorial shelter and men's meeting house. Timboni, 1984



Plate:91 Memorial sticks at Charo's home. Height: 8-10 inches.  
Timboni, 1984



Plate:92 Dilapidated memorial shelter at Karisa wa Fondo's home.  
Timboni, 1984





Plate:93 Memorial stick representing woman, and showing ritual colours. Ribe, 1982



Plate:94 Memorial shelter at Mulai wa Kabao's home. Shariani, 1984



Plate:95 Memorial representing ordinary ancestors and luvoo elders, 1984



Plate:96 Memorials at Mulai's home. 1984





Plate:97 Memorials representing ordinary ancestors and luvoo elders, at the home of Mwanjale Nduria. Shariani, 1984

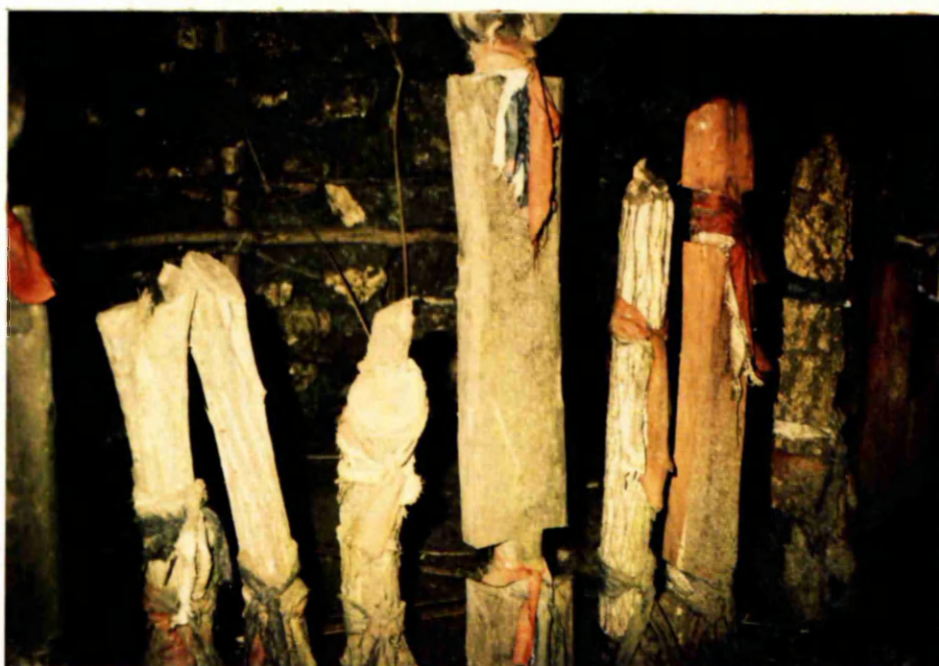


Plate:98 Memorials showing ritual colours. 1984

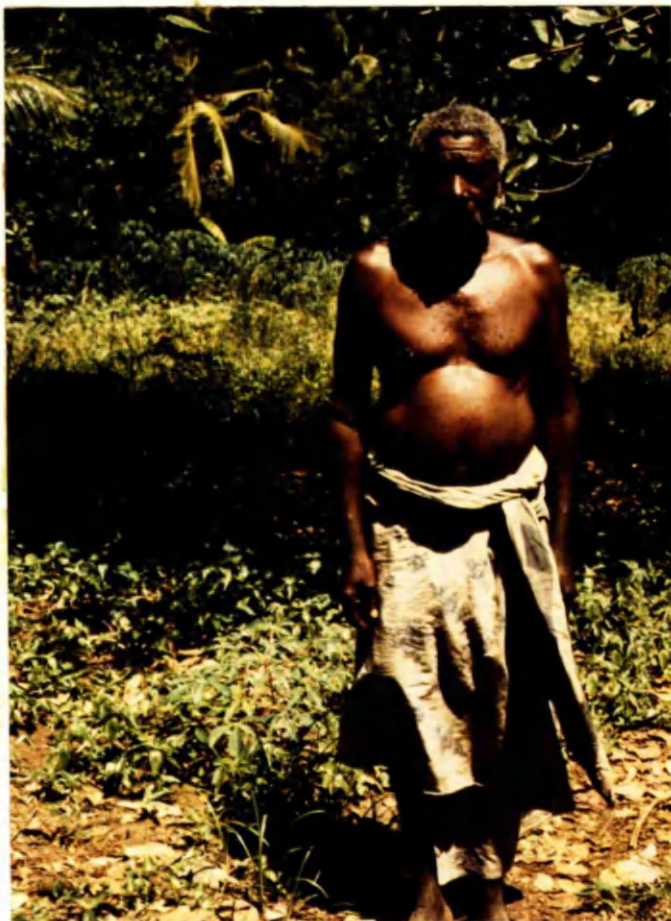


Plate:99 Charo wa Mbita, luvoo elder, wearing luvoo bracelet.  
Shariani, 1985

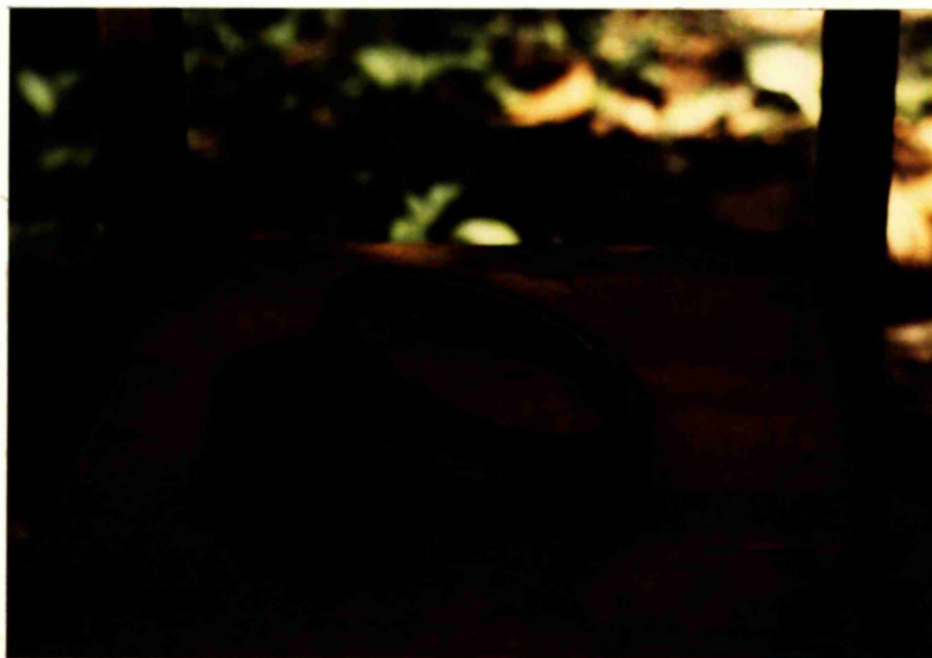


Plate:100 Luvoo bracelet made of buffalo horn. 1985





Plate:101 Maize field where some vigango are located.  
Matsangoni, 1984



Plate:102 The grandson of one of the deceased ancestors represented  
by vigango. 1984





Plate:103 Vigango (decorated): height: 5ft. Vibao (plain) height:  
1984

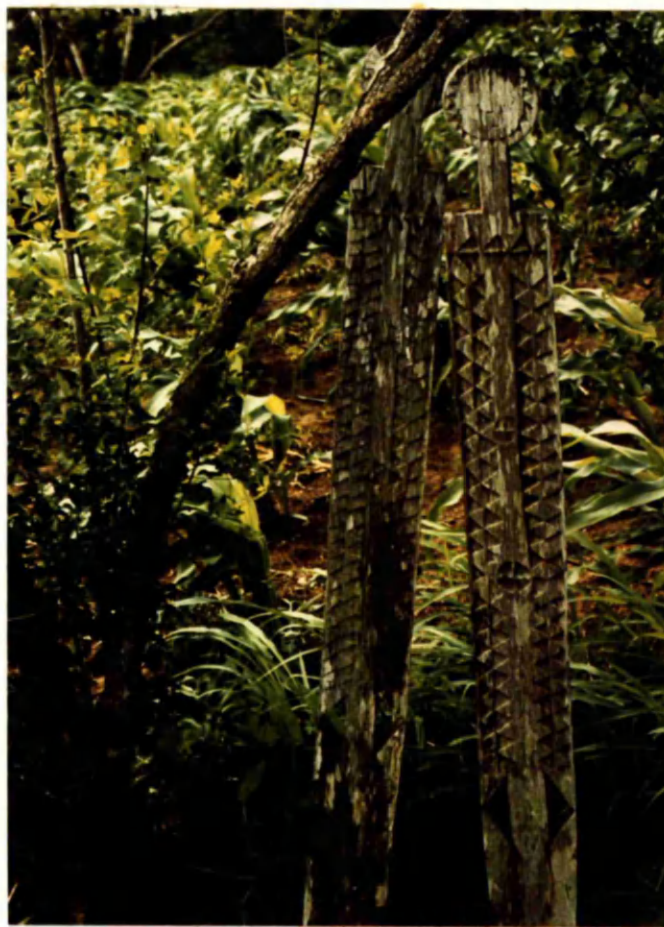


Plate:104 Two of the vigango showing decorations. 1984



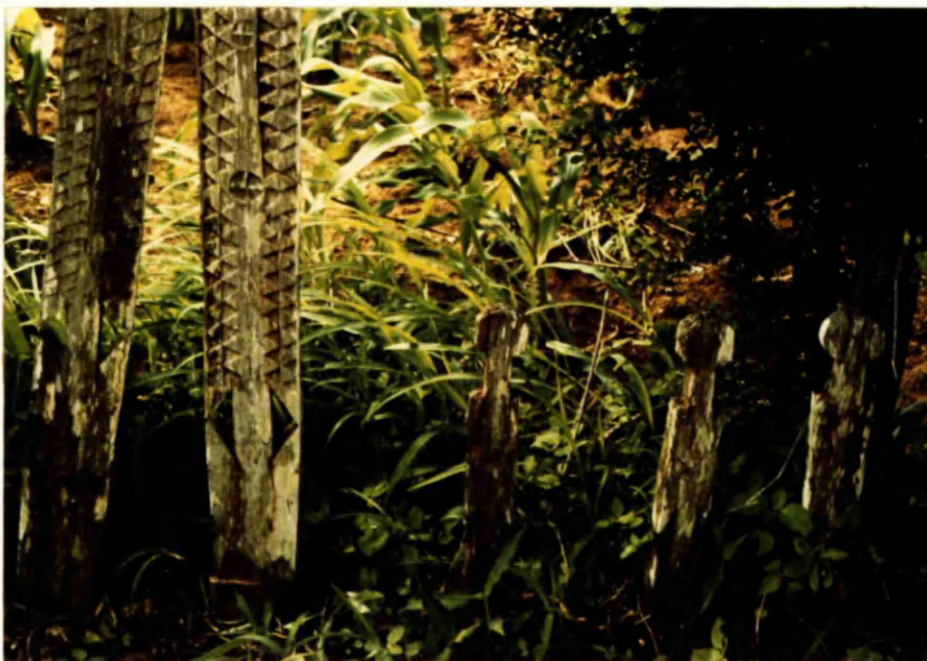


Plate:105 Patterns on lower section of vigango. Vibao are plain.  
1984



Plate:106 Patterns on back view of vigango. 1984





Plate:107 Close-up of patterns on vigango. 1984



Plate:108 Close-up of patterns on upper section of vigango. 1984





Plate:109 Close-up of patterns on middle section of kigango. 1984



Plate:110 Close-up of patterns on head of kigango. 1984



Plate:111 Vigango, very old, at a Nairobi curio stall, 1985



Plate:112 Kigango: height: 7ft. At a Nairobi curio stall, 1985





Plate:113 Kigango, showing head and cloth tied at neck. Nairobi, 1985



Plate:114 Kigango, lower section. 1985



Plate:115 Kigango, close-up of patterning at lower section. 1985

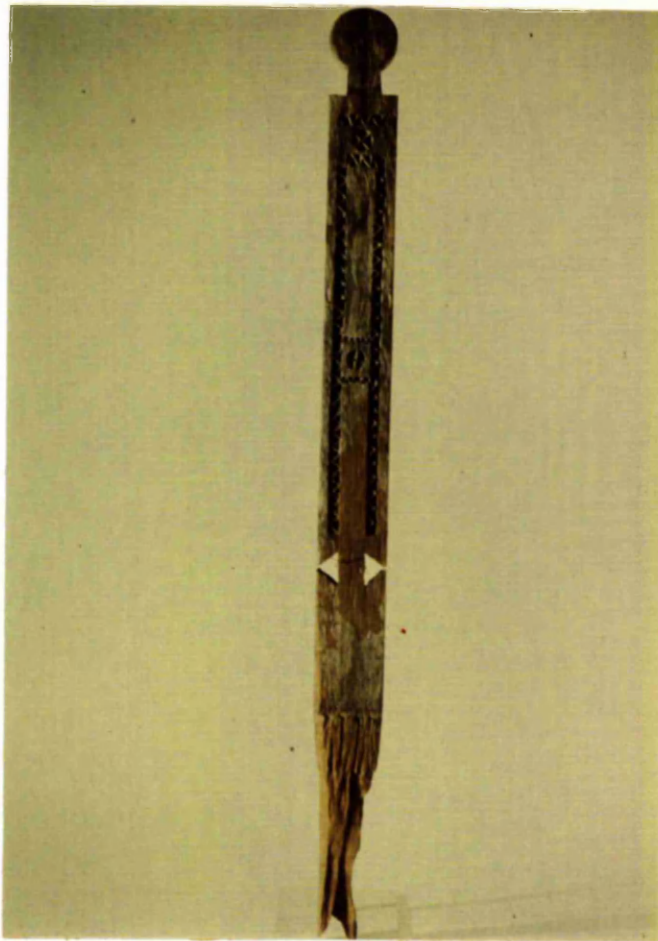


Plate:116 Kigango, in the National Museum of African Art,  
Smithsonian Institution



Plate:119 Kigango, with white and blue colours, courtesy of  
Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi



Plate:117 Kigango, courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage,  
Nairobi



Plate:120 Kigango, courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage,  
Nairobi



Plate:118 Kigango, courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage,  
Nairobi





Plate:121 Kigango, courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi



Plate:122 Kigango with coins marking eyes. Courtesy of Alan Donovan African Heritage, Nairobi



Plate:123 Kigango, fake. Notice machine-planed plank. Courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi



Plate:124 Kigango, front view. Courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi



Plate:125 Kigango, back view. Patterns similar to Swahili, Boni and Bajun. Courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi





Plate:126 Kigango, close-up of patterns at middle section. Courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi



Plate:127 Kigango, close-up of patterns at lower section. Courtesy of Alan Donovan, African Heritage, Nairobi





Plate:128 Giriama Carvers' workshop. Matsangoni, 1984



Plate:129 Kahindi Kaingu (Giriama) carving a mask. Matsangoni, 1984



Plate:130 Kahindi Kaingu carving a mask. 1984



Plate:131 Katana Kazungu (Giriama). Matsangoni, 1984





Plate:132 Kamba Carvers. Chagamwe Carving Cooperative,  
Mombasa. 1982



Plate:133 Kamba Carver. C.C.C., 1982



Plate:134 Kamba Carver. C.C.C., 1982



Plate:135 Kamba Carver. C.C.C., 1982





Plate:136 Kamba Carver. C.C.C., 1982



Plate:137 Kamba Carver. C.C.C., 1982



Plate:138 Kamba Carver. C.C.C., 1982



Plate:139 Kamba Carver. C.C.C., 1982





Plate:140 Kamba beaded belt (compare technique + patterns with Mijikenda type beadwork)



Plate:141 Kamba beaded belt (compare with mijikenda beadwork)

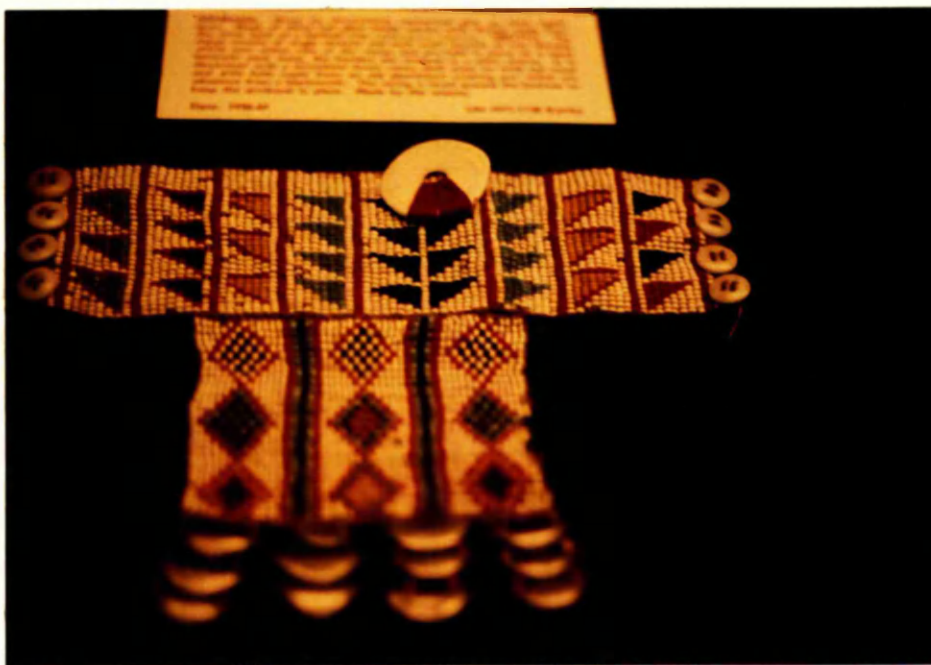


Plate:142 Kamba beaded band (compare with Mijikenda beadwork)

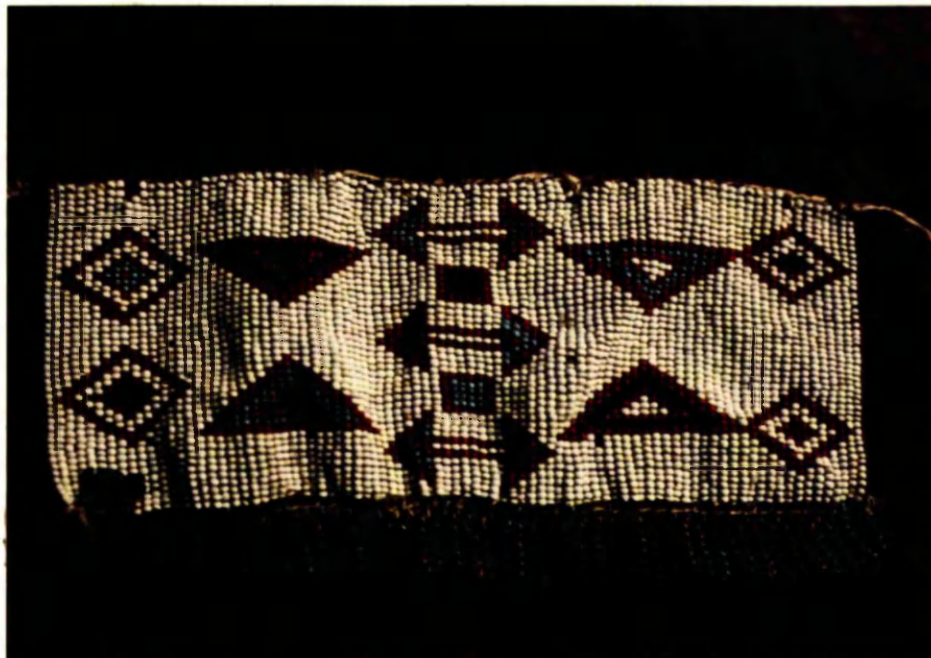


Plate:143 Kamba beaded apron (compare patterns with Mijikenda ones)